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THE NEW YORKER

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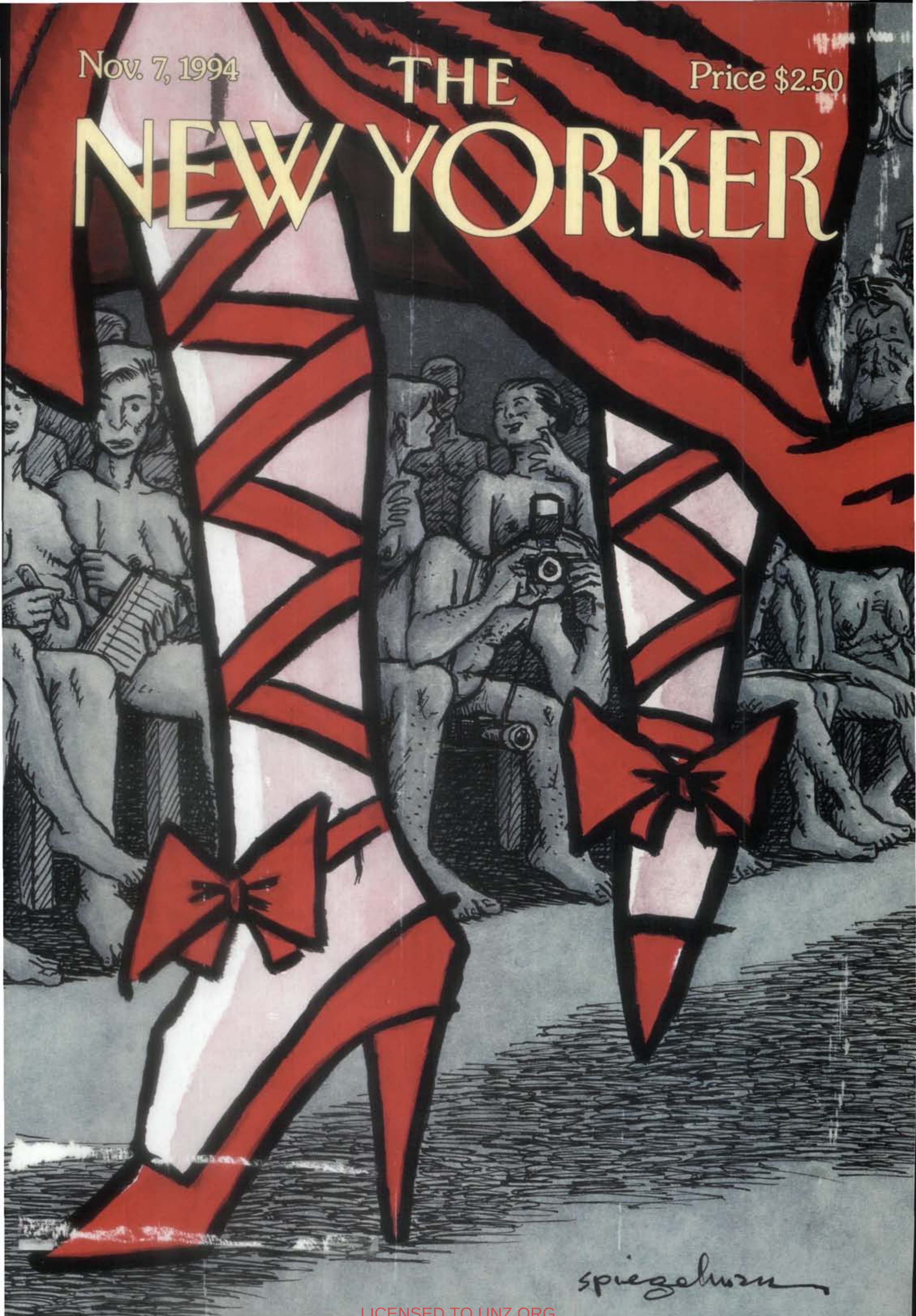
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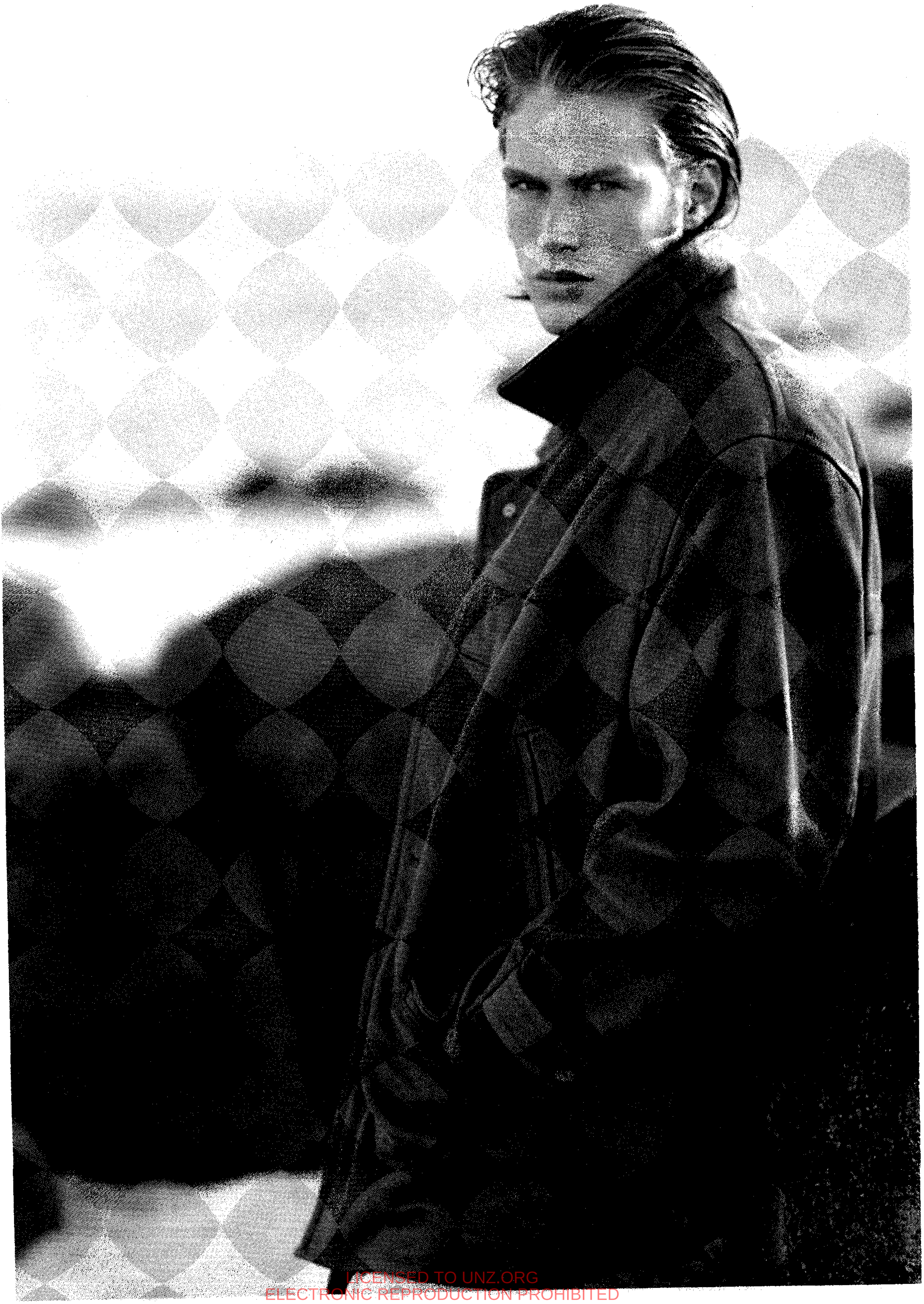

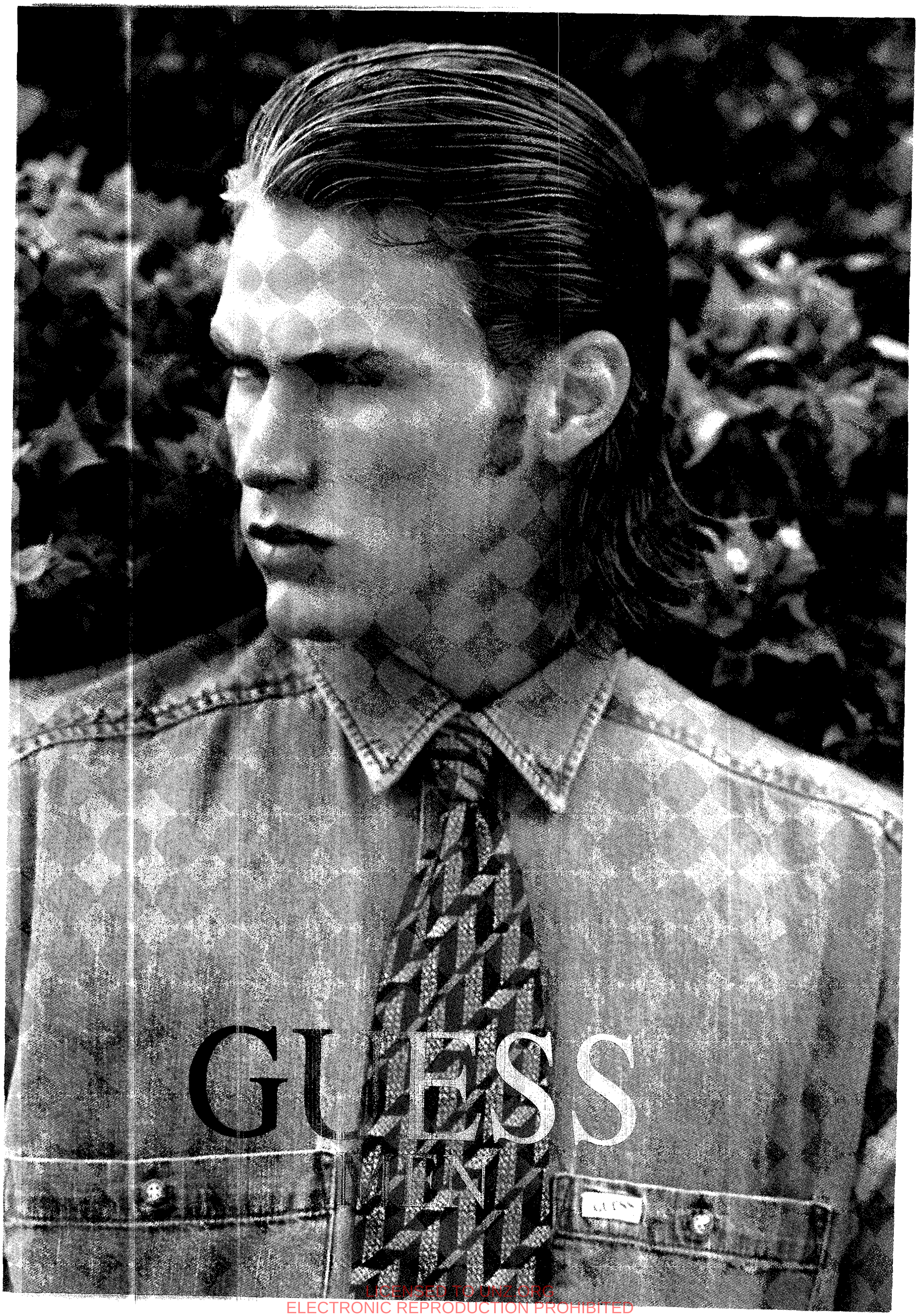
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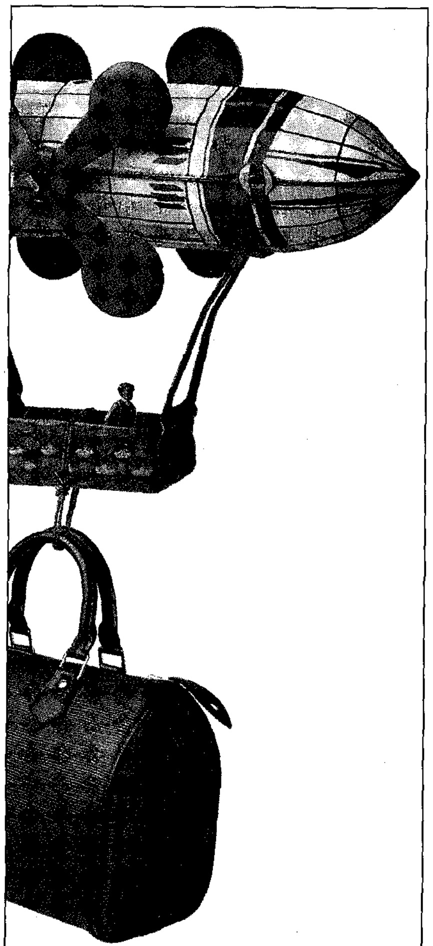

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NOVEMBER 7, 1994

THE WORLD OF FASHION

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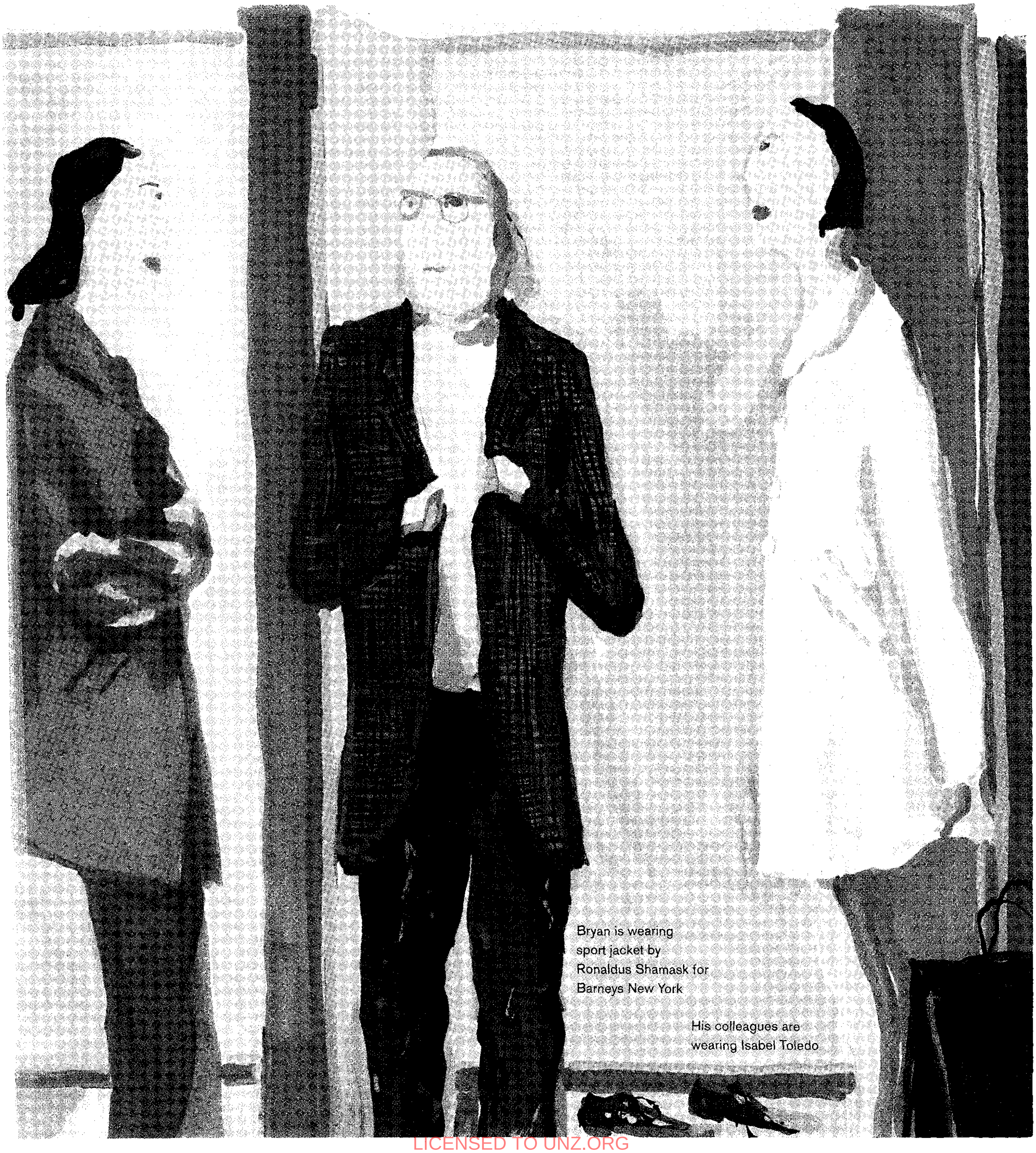
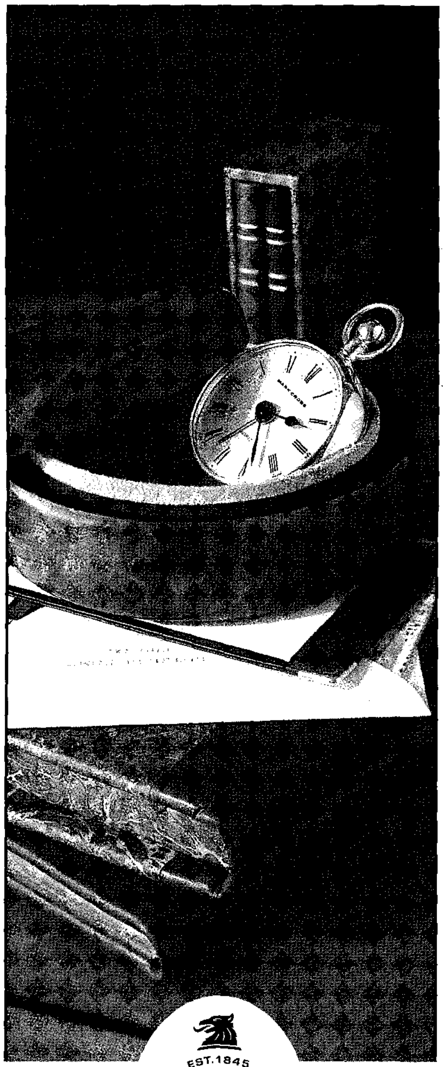


Bryan is wearing
sport jacket by
Ronaldus Shamask for
Barneys New York

His colleagues are
wearing Isabel Toledo



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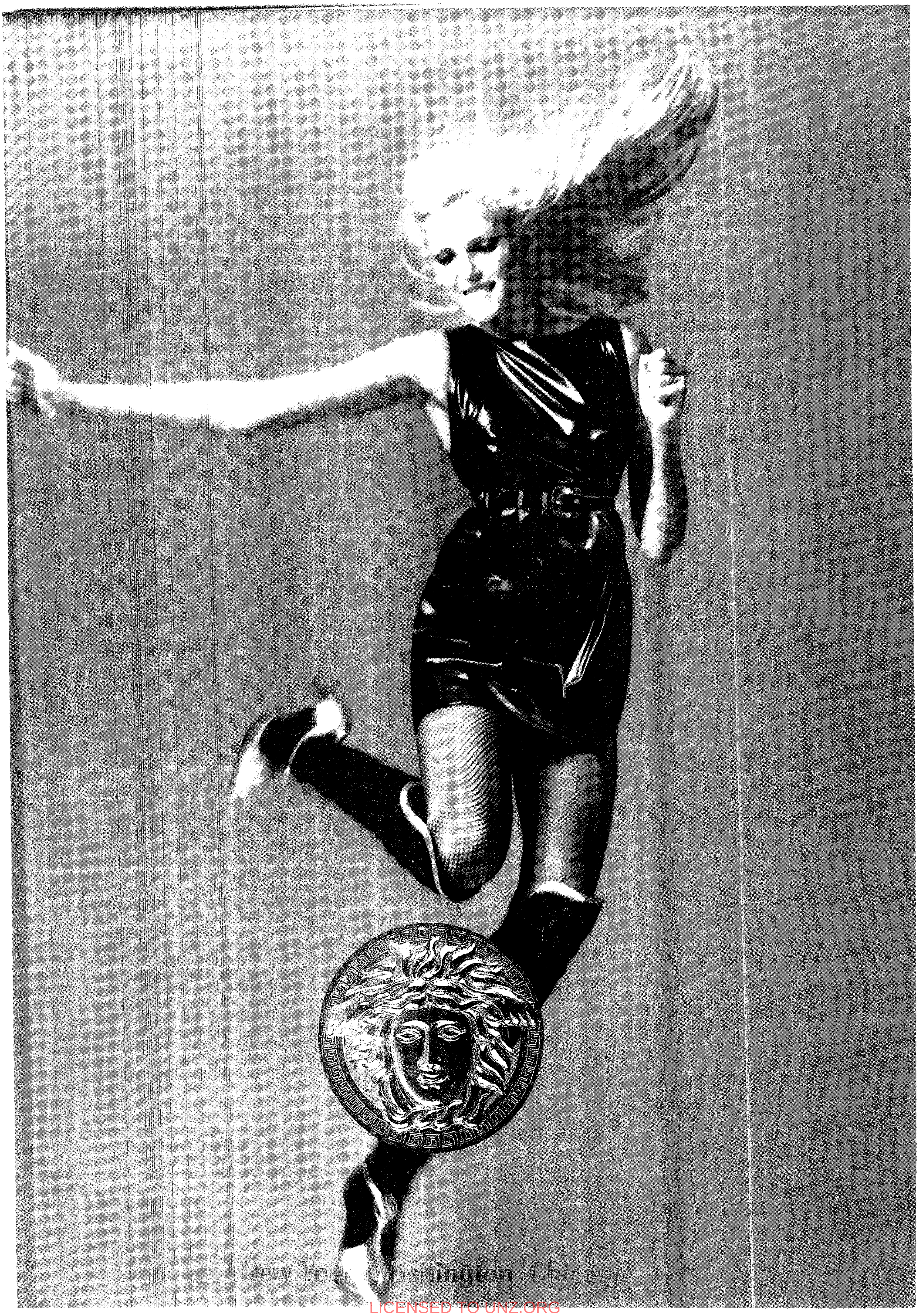
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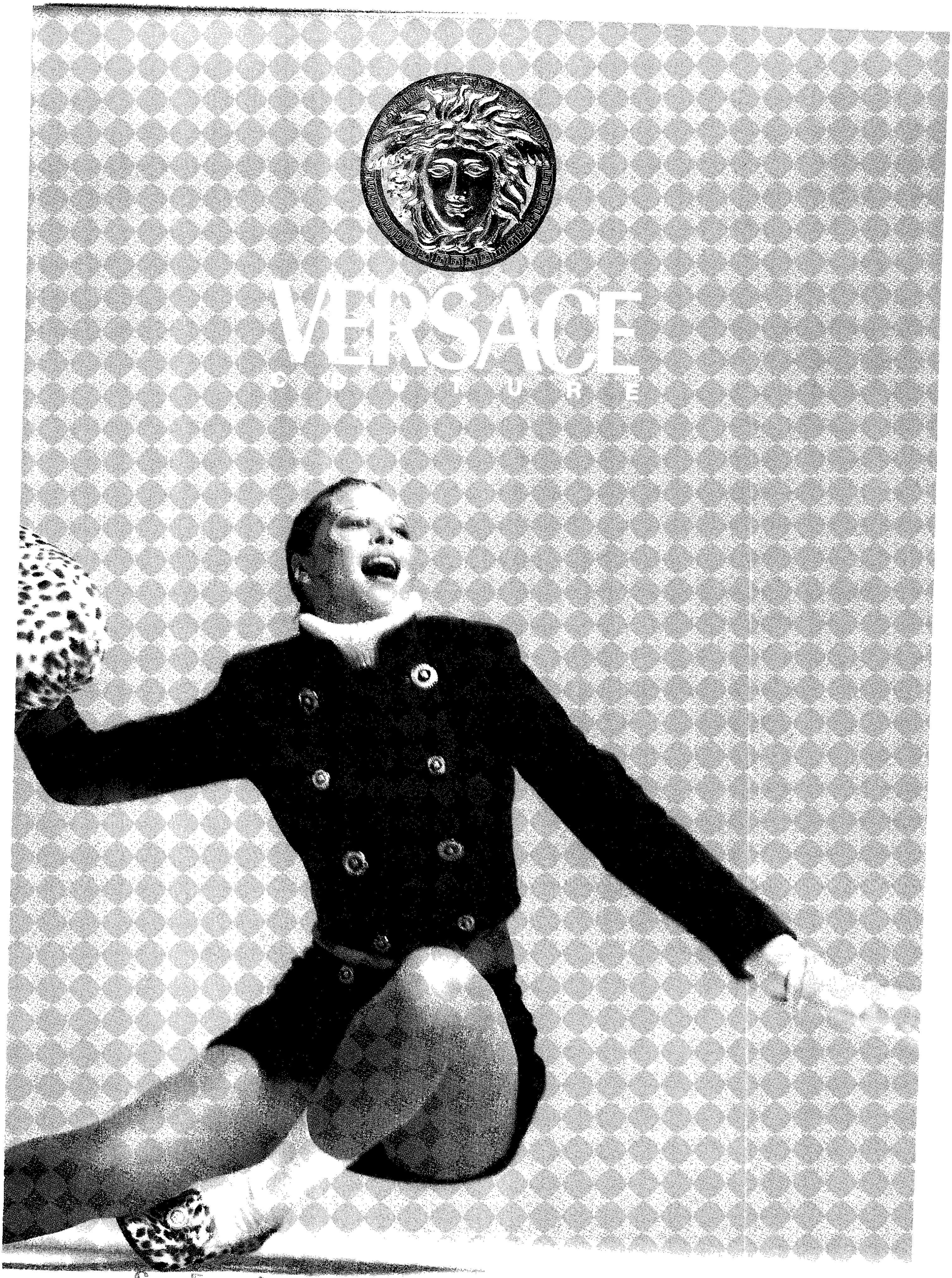
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"*Did you ever notice how good he smells?*"

GEORGIA: *I finally went out to dinner with him last night.*

JACKIE: *Just the two of you? Where did you go?*

GEORGIA: *Mario's.*

JACKIE: *Mario's? The food is terrible.*

GEORGIA: *I didn't notice. I don't really even know what I ate.*

JACKIE: *Really?*

GEORGIA: *You should have seen him. He was so sweet. He spilled his wine all over my dress.*

JACKIE: *Adorable.*

GEORGIA: *And then when he reached over to give me his napkin, he knocked over his water glass.*

JACKIE: *Hilarious.*

GEORGIA: *Well, it was. We couldn't stop laughing. We just had to get out of there. We laughed all the way back to my place.*

JACKIE: *Your place?*

GEORGIA: *Well, I was soaked. And besides...*

JACKIE: *Besides.*

GEORGIA: *Did you ever notice how good he smells?*

JACKIE: *Frankly, no.*

GEORGIA: *He wears the most wonderful cologne.*

JACKIE: *Dare I ask what it is?*

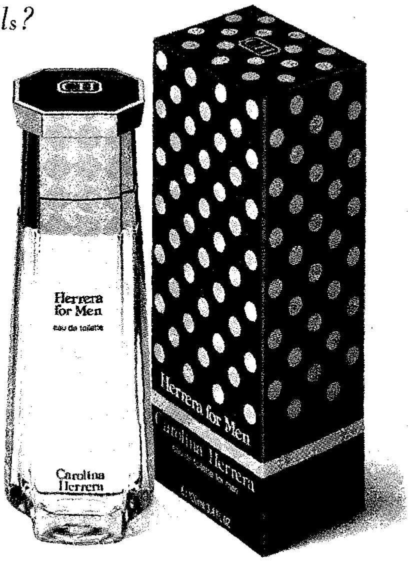
GEORGIA: *Well, it comes in a box with dots.*

JACKIE: *Dots?*

GEORGIA: *Dots.*

JACKIE: *So. Now we're back at your place...*

GEORGIA: *Jackie, how's your mother?*



Bloomingdale's

Herrera for Men

Carolina Herrera
New York

COMMENT

WHAT IT ALL MEANS

Fashion? Well, here's the main thing: it's fun.

WHAT does fashion mean, and why does it matter? The usual answers sound tinny. Does it matter because it is a big business? (So is the prestressed concrete industry, but no one cares much about that.) Because it reflects our hidden ideas about "gender" and sex? (So does everything.) If you read those big, chewy, thoughtful new books about fashion, you'd imagine that fashion matters just because it is a kind of key, or secret code, to social history or contemporary life: the way people dress is an index to what they think about themselves and about other people. At this magazine, starting with Lois Long, who wrote about fashion from 1925 through the nineteen-sixties, the attitude toward clothes has mostly been to say what they look like and let it go at that. The subject of fashion is our appetite for the capricious, which is subject enough for anybody. Fashion is a theatre of manners, not a tribune of morals.

What's weird is that people seem o want to believe that fashion has a message just at the moment when it no longer tries hard to make a point. There was a time when fashion was all points—crisp, absolute, and utterly imperative. A Carmel Snow/Diana Vreeland-era issue of *Harper's Bazaar*, for instance, offers a terrifying flood of certainties. ("The halo hat is finished. Hats are worn way over on one ear, or set slightly forward over the forehead," a typical block of copy directs.) Even when the clothes didn't change much, the imperatives did; the imperatives, more than the clothes, *were* the fashion.

Sometimes they still are. Just last month, for instance, a famous fashion magazine reported on the Parisian couture for fall. "Body Language" was its tag, and the fashion copy went, "Voluptuous. It's a word that conjures up the feminine form, all rounded and curvy and sexy. And voluptuousness is what the Paris fall couture collections were all about, as designers revived and glorified the Body Beautiful. Cast off those loose, fluid layers, they said, and show off that bod. . . ." What followed, of

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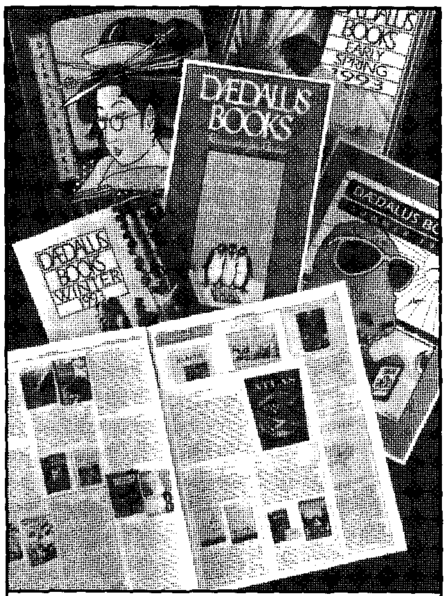

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course, was pictures of Christy and Claudia and all the other girls whose curves are by now as familiar (and as welcome) as the exit ramp on the highway home.

But, increasingly, people seem embarrassed by the transparency of fashion, and want to hang their interest in it on something more: on women's attitudes toward their bodies, or on men's attitudes toward their status, or on sex. The truth is that reason really doesn't have much to do with the reasons of fashion. What can explain tie-dye? Or maxi-coats? People who try to make fashion "matter" by insisting that it is the key to social history are barking up the wrong tree—or, anyway, rummaging in the wrong closet. The range of possible solutions to the problem of putting clothes on people is, given the awkward, starfish appendages of the human form and the natural timidity of the human mind, extremely limited and stereotyped. These days, women's clothes get tight and then they get loose; men's clothes get a little wider in the lapel and then they get a little narrower. The possibility and romance and range of reference that we sense in clothes are all surplus value. What clothes reflect most of all is the eternal desire to be wanted, and the equally eternal and more wistful wish to disguise that desire. (Those disguises can sometimes be so beautiful and even poetic that the desire for them becomes a romance of its own.)

Fashion is an instinct yoked to an abstraction. It takes something basic and unchanging—sexual yearning—and attaches it, improbably, to a subtle, completely arbitrary algorithm of change. Fashion, by making the little round of variations within that fixed framework of pure wanting so arbitrary—this hemline up now, this lapel wider *right this minute*—gives us a comforting sense of controlling our own instincts. We attach an abstraction to an appetite in order to persuade ourselves that the appetite may not be quite so raw as we know it to be.

The economic, as distinct from the social, *raison d'être* of fashion resides in the need to make people buy things they don't need. If the clothes can't be relied upon to wear out fast enough, something must be found that will wear out faster; that something is what we call fashion. But fashion is one form of the familiar capitalist technique of planned obsolescence which can be enjoyed with a clear conscience. Many of the world's people wear secondhand clothes, which are available in good condition at low prices because of the fickleness of their original buyers. There may be snobbery in couture, but there is a democratic impulse in fashion, inasmuch as its codes are right there on the surface, to be read. Flora Thompson, in her beautiful trilogy "Lark Rise to Candleford," tells how the imposed cycles of fashion used to be reiterated in her little Oxfordshire hamlet as the more fortunate girls in service in London handed down their discarded dresses to their younger sisters, and of how grateful the village girls were for a distraction so worldly in the midst o a life so plain. Fashion gives pleasure because it is arbitrary, and pleasure i the one product always worth buying And fashion, in its conscientious capriciousness, carries within it a tiny, debased religious impulse. It offers u pleasure with only one condition—that when we ask our continual, wheedling "Why?" the only answer we can eve expect to get back is the one-size-fits-all explanation of gods and parents, th eternal, consoling "Because."

—ADAM GOPNI

GIORGIO ARMANI

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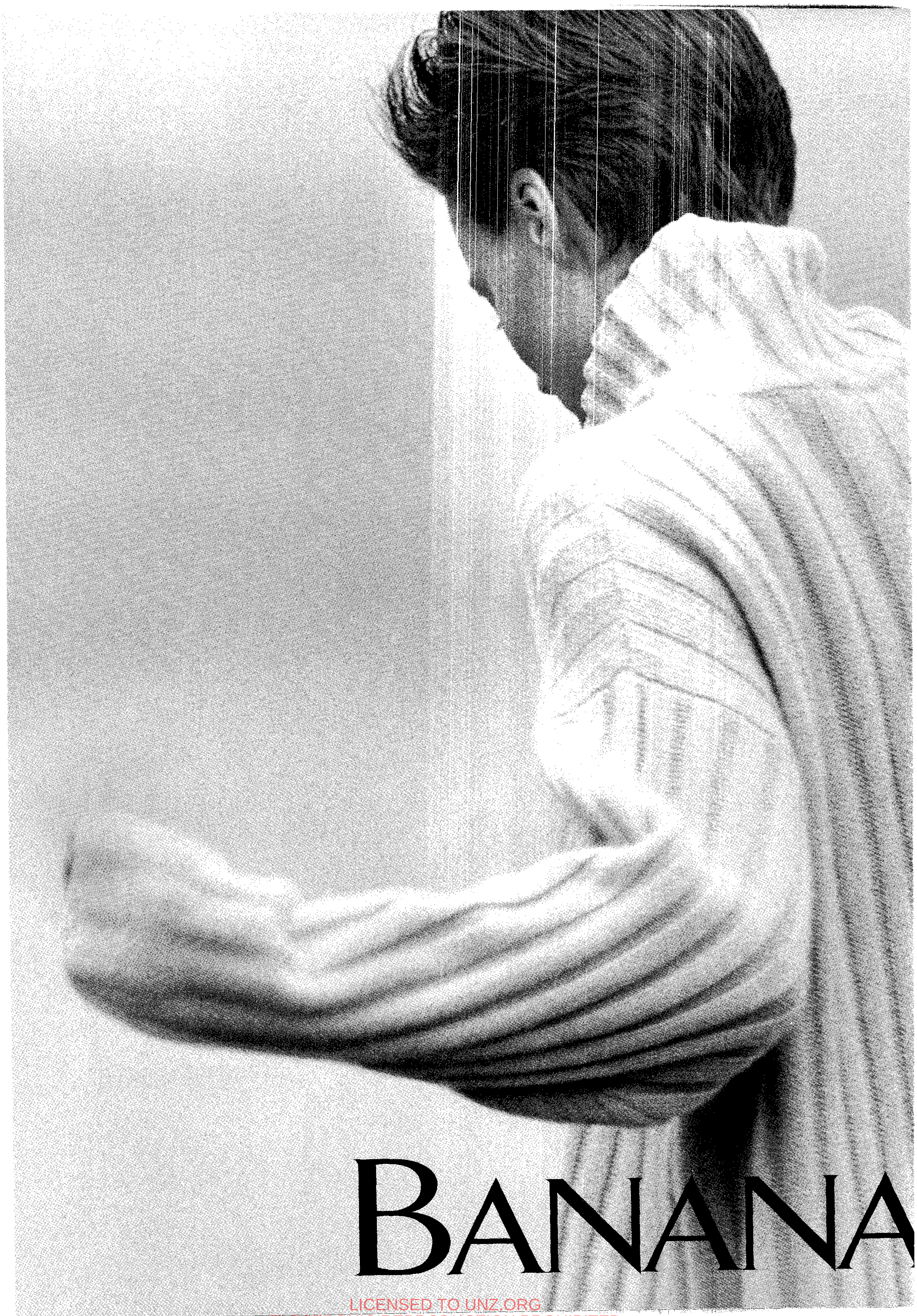
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IN THE MAIL

OPEN SEASON

While on the whole Jeffrey Toobin's "X-Rated" (October 3rd) accurately characterizes the grave dangers that all of us—and, in particular, women and sexual-orientation minorities—would face under any regime that regulates sexual materials deemed "degrading" to women, in one important respect he underestimates these dangers. He concludes that the provisions of the Dworkin-MacKinnon model law that would allow women to sue for monetary damages if they were coerced into participating in pornography, or were physically harmed by someone who had been exposed to it, "would pose no threat to civil liberties." On the contrary, these provisions would be no less dangerous than the provision banning "trafficking" in pornography, which Mr. Toobin calls "a hunting license to go after any purveyor of erotica for any reason." Accordingly, all the courts that have ruled on this proposed law, including the United States Supreme Court, have found it unconstitutional in toto. In addition, given the law's expansive concept of "coercion," which essentially equates women with children and deems us inherently incapable of meaningful consent where pornography is concerned, all of its provisions are as damaging to women's rights as they are to free expression.

NADINE STROSSEN
President, American Civil Liberties Union
New York City

It's only fitting that Andrea Dworkin's books have been seized by Canadian customs for censorship violations. Dworkin is, after all, the woman who has called for the wholesale destruction of the pornography industry. Though she feels that "Pornography Violates My Civil Rights," she's not opposed to violating the civil rights of the women (and men) who toil in the netherworld of commercial erotica by denying them the opportunity to pursue the career of their choosing. In writing for magazines like *Swank* and *D-Cup*, I've interviewed dozens of "porn stars." If they've made one thing explicitly clear, it's that nobody has ever forced them to do anything they didn't want to do. I hear variations of the same story over and over: to them, pornography is a way out of a dead-end, minimum-wage job. No censorship law—not even one disguised as a civil-rights law—will ever work. It will only lead to the abuse of police power or enrich attorneys who specialize in defending pornographers.

ROBERT ROSEN
New York City

Belgium suffers enough indignities without having its single best-known, and arguably its finest, contribution to world culture misattributed to its Gallic big sister, as it is by Mr. Toobin when he makes a passing reference to "France's famous . . . Tintin series." The globe-trotting cartoon reporter is very much Belgian, as was his creator, Georges Rémi (better known under his pen name, Hergé), and it was in the pages of a Belgian newspaper that the Tintin stories were initially serialized.

KIM THOMPSON
Seattle, Wash.

CHILD ABUSE

Lawrence Wright makes an excellent case in his Comment of October 3rd "Child-Care Demons," which I would like to take one step further. While he asserts that coercing testimony of sexua abuse from children is abuse, he does not specifically say that it is sexual abuse but that is what it effectively is. Actua

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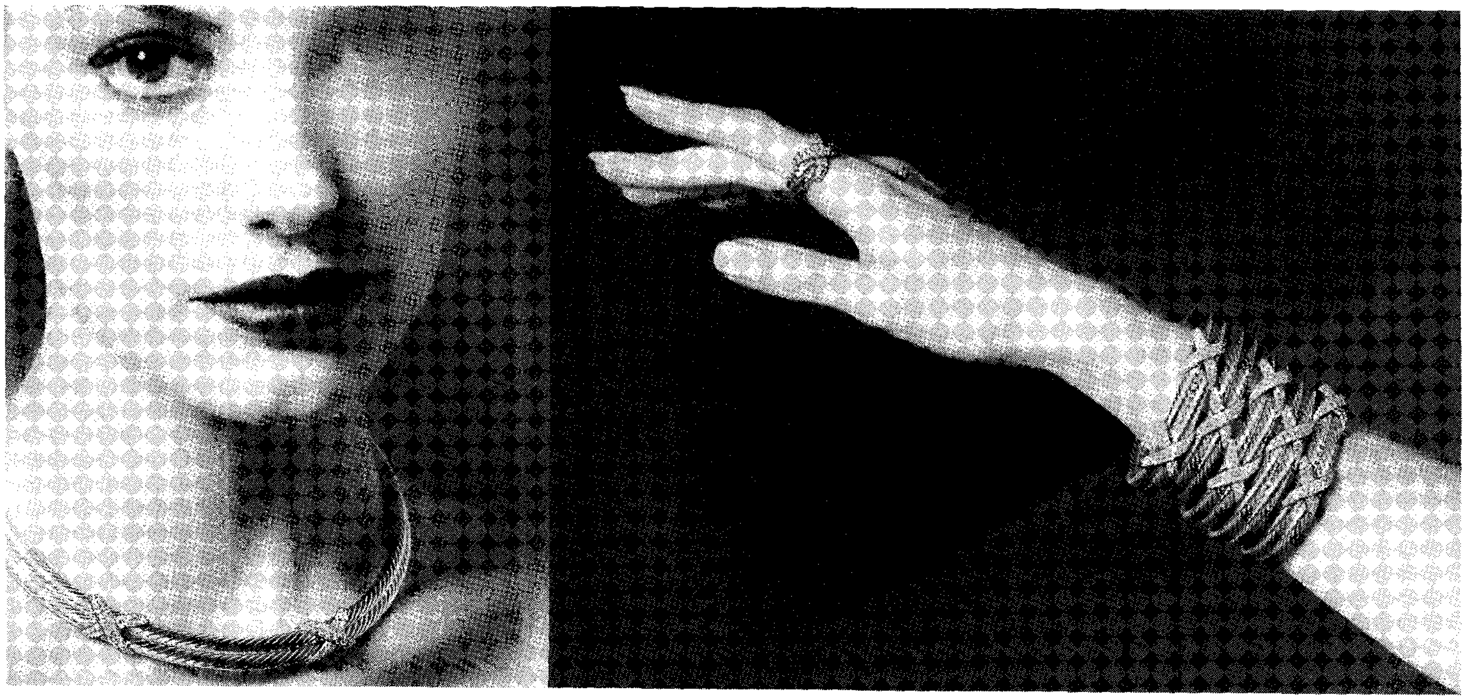

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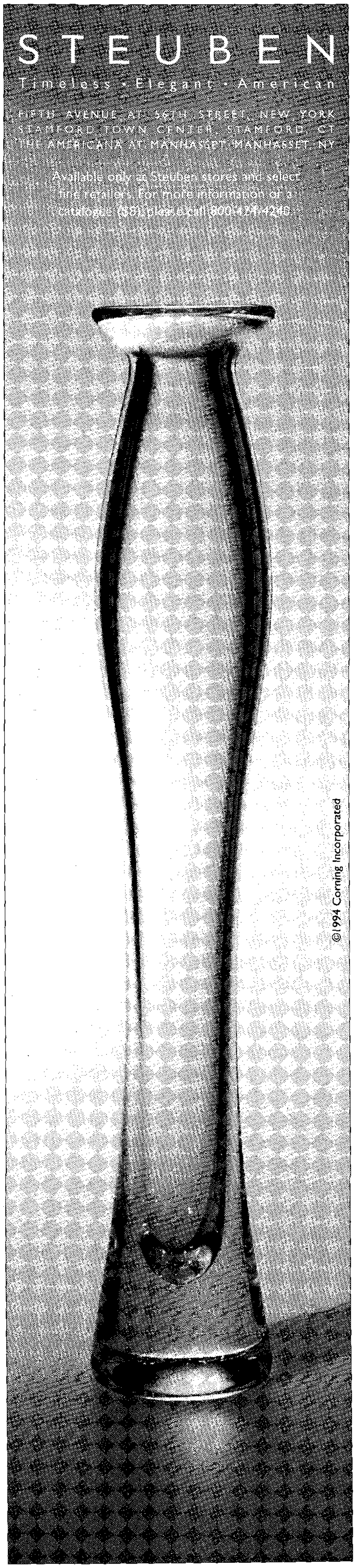
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sexual abuse of children by adults warps their emerging sexuality by undermining their ability to trust others and demonizing their natural impulses. Convincing children that they have undergone abuse when they have not puts them through a facsimile of this wrenching experience. It forces them to doubt their perceptions of their experiences and their bodies in relation to others. Whether the abuse is actual or virtual, the child is left with a tremendous burden, which may require years of psychotherapy to lift, if lifting it is even possible.

SUSAN MILLER SMITH
New York City

Mr. Wright's observation that "forcing children to invent stories of abuse *is* abuse" applies to more than accusations against child-care workers. As a public defender in the overcrowded courts of Cook County, Illinois, I almost daily see parents using their children as weapons against estranged spouses, ex-lovers, and neighbors. Sometimes tiny children bewilderingly parrot the slanders concocted for them, and so are forced to learn too soon about internal physical exams and prosecutor interviews. Even more frightening is the situation of older children who triumphantly perjure themselves by testifying against someone they have been taught to hate. Only once have I seen an adult charged for deliberately using a child to falsely accuse an enemy. The exploitation of our courts for private vendettas is cynical; the exploitation of our children for them is tragic.

JEANNE BISHOP
Chicago, Ill.

MR. CARTER GOES TO HAITI

"It All Codepends," by Michael Kelly (October 3rd), points up again Jimmy Carter's curious indifference to the fact that he failed to be reëlected. Ironically, a previous indifference to an unpleasant reality may have accounted for that failure: Carter's decision to admit the deposed Shah of Iran to the United States for medical treatment. The result, of course, was the Iranian hostage crisis, which, together with an undermanned, weirdly planned rescue mission, doomed the President's chances for a second term. Carter is an eminently decent and reasonably honorable person. But any current leader who stakes his future on Carter's good judgment is almost certain to suffer Carter's fate.

DAVID GOLDKNOPF
New Paltz, N.Y.

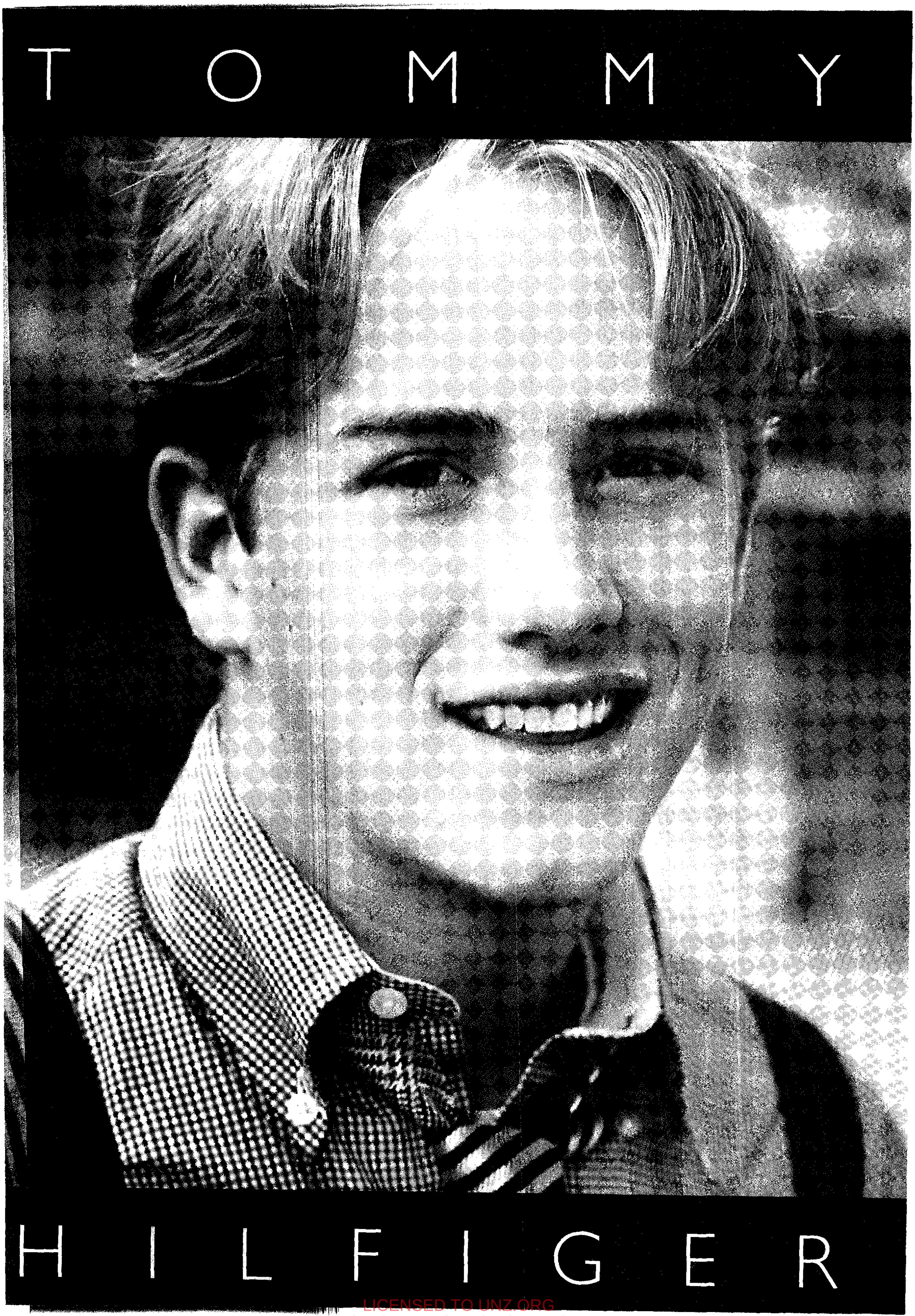
Mr. Kelly's article would be amusing for its ill-concealed waspishness regarding the foreign-policy accomplishments of former President Carter if it were simply the post-adolescent musings of a graduate student in political science. His writing is appealing, but the force of his argument is not. Since Mr. Kelly thinks that Mr. Carter's mission to Haiti effected "a better deal than the White House could have got on its own" and that Mr. Carter "probably did the right thing in renegotiating United States policy on the fly," why does he view the result as "a strange way of doing business"? Haven't we learned that the conventional way of doing business—whether in the following of a nebulous "long-standing policy" or in the pursuit of equally impalpable "interests considered by the current President to be vital to the nation"—can be *the most dysfunctional behavior of all?*

HARRY J. FUHRMAN, JR.
Guerneville, Calif.

Mr. Kelly complains that the Clinton Administration may be the first to include more people who have gone through therapy than people who have gone through military service. I say "Bravo!" to this trend. It is not clear that this hopeful inference is warranted, but if Kelly is correct perhaps our nation will finally be run by people who are willing to examine the impact of their motives, their personal agendas, and their interpersonal habits on decisions that affect the lives of all of us, rather than by the sort of ego-driven posturers who have governed us in the recent past. Would it be preposterous to suggest that therapy should be made a requirement for election or appointment to high office? It that were to happen, then good-faith negotiation and reasonable attempts at compromise might replace gridlock, partisan politics, and high-stakes brinksmanship as the primary tools of government.

HARRY T. REI
Rochester, N.Y

Letters should be as brief as possible, and sen with the writer's name, address, and daytim phone number to "In the Mail," The New Yorke 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 1003 They may be edited for length and clarit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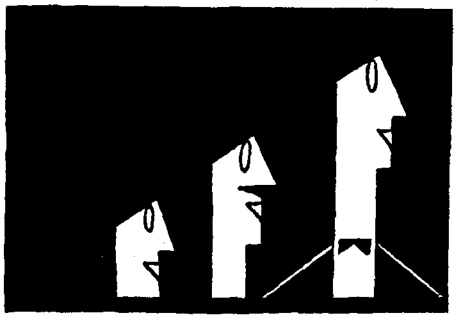

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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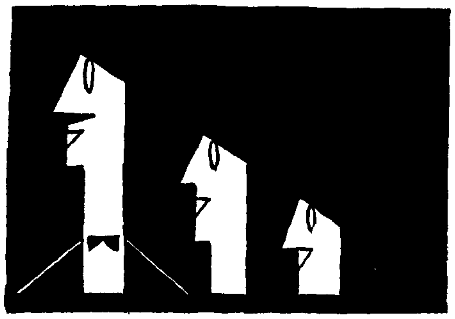
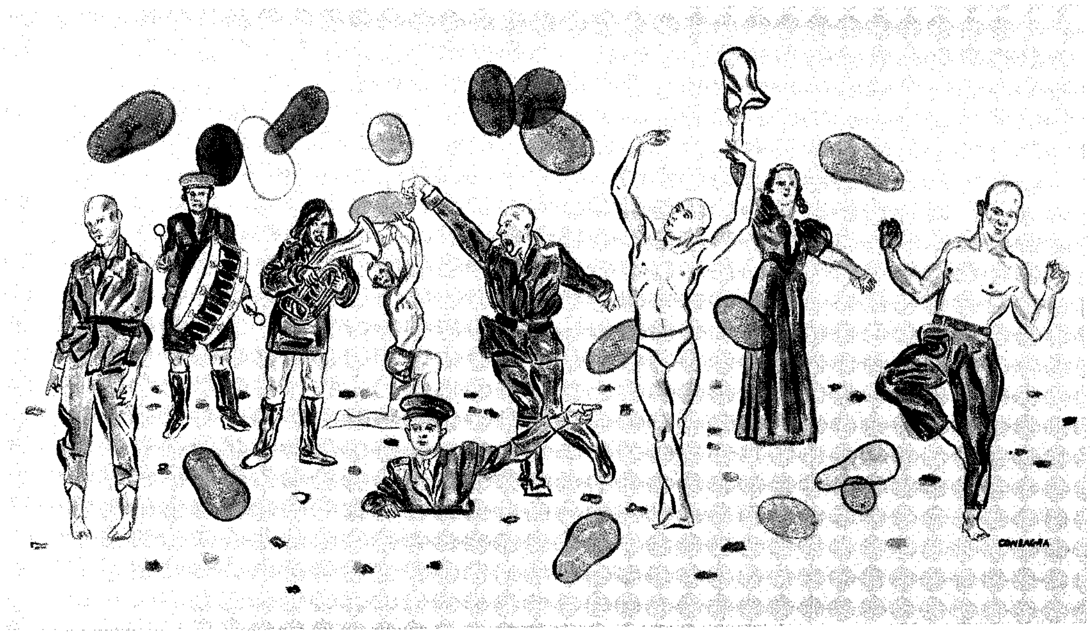


THE THEATRE

Red Army Blues

Now that socialist-realist heroes have been knocked from their upstage moorings, Russian theatre finally has room for some less than chaste and virtuous characters. In "Gaudeamus," a new play, based on a 1988 short story by Sergei Kaledin, to be presented by the Maly Drama Theatre of St. Petersburg at BAM, on November 2 and 4-6, the ranks of the Red Army are filled with drug addicts, dropouts, criminals, and ethnic minorities. For a satire, it's surprisingly lyrical, depicting the brutality endured and perpetrated by the shaven-headed conscripts of a construction battalion, who are essentially consigned to a life of forced labor. "Gaudeamus"—the title is taken from a medieval hymn to youth—turns what could have been just a sordid sketch of the Soviet lower depths into a chromatic rendering, mixing hope and depravity with odes both to joy and to Stalin, with a little Jacques Brel and a flying piano thrown in for good measure.

Lev Dodin, the fifty-year-old Siberian who has been the artistic director of the Maly for more than a decade, developed the play over several months, working on improvisations with company members and students from the St. Petersburg Institute of Theatre, where he teaches. Dodin can sound more like a man of the cloth than a man of the theatre when he explains the ambitious ideas behind his blending of French chansons and ballet with lurid scenes of violation and race-baiting. "I want to remind man of the cruel and evil things he can do and also that he is God's creation," he told a reporter. "The space between the two creates the aesthetic of the production."



"Gaudeamus" at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

The Beaux' Stratagem—A Restoration comedy by George Farquhar, presented by the Pearl Theatre Company. Previews through Nov. 5. Opens Nov. 6 at 2. (Theatre 80, at 80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

Blade to the Heat—Oliver Mayer's play about three Latino boxers, set in the fifties. George C. Wolfe is the director. Preview on Nov. 2. Opens Nov. 3 at 8. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

Das Barbecü—A musical comedy, inspired by Wagner's "Ring" cycle and set in Texas. The book and lyrics are by Jim Luigs and the score is by Scott Warrender. Christopher Ashley is the director. In previews. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave. 307-4100.)

Durang Durang—Short plays written by Christopher Durang, including "For Whom the Southern Belle Tolls," a spoof of "The Glass Menagerie." In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Gaudeamus—A play performed by St. Petersburg's Maly Drama Theatre, at the Next Wave Festival on Nov. 2 and Nov. 4-6. In Russian with English supertitles. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100.)

The Gift Horse—The Jewish Repertory Theatre presents a comedy by Michael Hardstark about a man whose Orthodox Jewish father-in-law devises betting schemes based on Scripture. Previews through Nov. 5. Opens Nov. 6 at 7. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

The Glass Menagerie—Julie Harris stars as Amanda Wingfield in the Roundabout's production of the Tennessee Williams classic. The cast also includes Calista Flockhart, Željko Ivanek, and Kevin Kilner. In previews. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Inside Out—Adryan Russ and Doug Haverty's musical comedy about six women who meet each week for group therapy. "Roleplay," an earlier version of the show, played Off-Off Broadway two years ago. Previews through Nov. 6. Opens Nov. 7 at 7. (Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 989-2020.)

Me and Jezebel—Elizabeth Fuller's two-person show about the month Bette Davis spent with the author and her family. Randy Allen portrays Miss Davis. The play was seen recently at the Ballroom. In previews. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 691-6226.)

Night Seasons—Jean Stapleton is the matriarch of a wealthy Texas family in this play by Horton Foote, the Signature Theatre Company's playwright-in-residence this season. Opens Nov. 4 at 8 and runs through Dec. 4. (Kampo Cultural Center 31 Bond St. 279-4200.)

Public Enemy—The New York première of a 198 play by Kenneth Branagh which is set in Belfast Two previews on Nov. 2 Opens Nov. 3 at 8. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51s St. 757-3318.)

The Shadow Box—A revival of Michael Cristofer's 1977 play, with Mary Alice, Frankie R. Faison Ron Frazier, Sean Nelson Estelle Parsons, Mercede Ruehl, Raphael Sbarge Jamey Sheridan, and Marlo Thomas. Preview begin Nov. 4. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. wes of Broadway. 239-6200.)

Simpatico—A new play by Sam Shepard about racetrack lowlife, with Beverly D'Angelo, Marcia Gay Harden, Ed Harris, Jame Gammon, and Welke White. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598 7150.)

Sunset Boulevard—Glen Close stars as Norm Desmond in Andre

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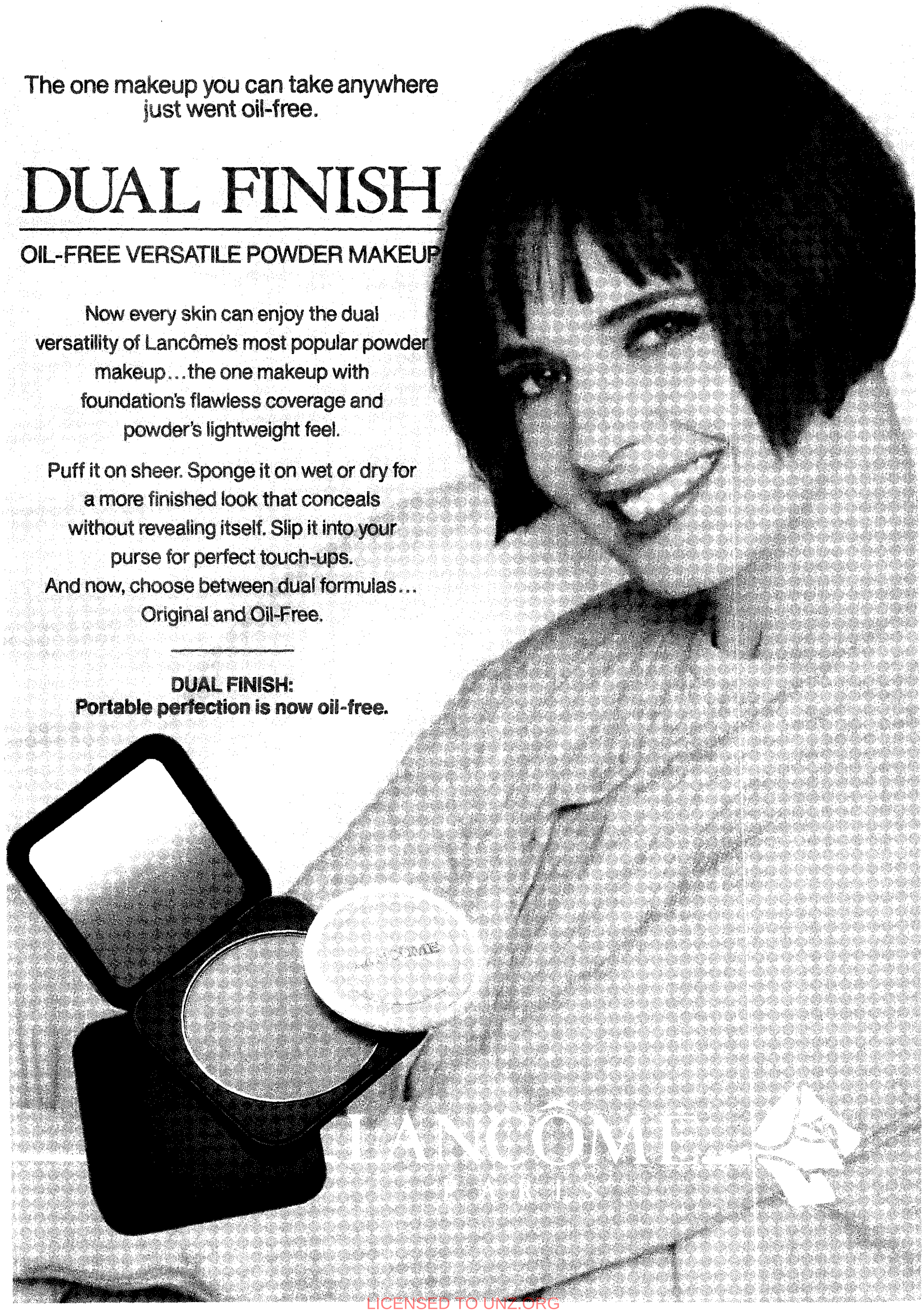


THE THEATRE–Cont'd

Lloyd Webber's new musical. Based on the 1950 movie and directed by Trevor Nunn, the show also features George Hearn, Alan Campbell, and Alice Ripley. In previews. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

3 Postcards—Craig Lucas and Craig Carnelia's musical about three Manhattan friends, which has been reworked since its début at Playwrights Horizons, in 1987, is the first offering of the season at Circle Rep. In previews. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 239-6200.)

Why We Have a Body—Claire Chafee's romantic comedy about four women, one of whom holds up convenience stores for a living. Presented by the Women's Project. Previews through Nov. 6. Opens Nov. 8 at 8. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

You Should Be So Lucky—Charles Busch has the lead in this comedy, which he also wrote. He's joined in the cast by Nell Campbell, Julie Halston, and Stephen Pearlman. Kenneth Elliott is the director. Opens Nov. 2 at 8 and runs through Nov. 20. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-7471.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Beauty and the Beast—Disney's Broadway money-spinner, adapted from the animated-film version, has a few moments of solid-gold theatrical amazement: the showstopping "Be Our Guest" production number and the Beast's transformation into the Prince. Directed by Robert Jess Roth. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/2/94.) (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100.)

Carousel—Nicholas Hytner's authoritative direction combines with Bob Crowley's inspired sets to transplant the National Theatre's 1993 smash hit onto the Vivian Beaumont stage. Bold, beautiful, and controversial, this multicultural reinterpretation launches Rodgers and Hammerstein toward the twenty-first century. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

A Cheever Evening—A. R. Gurney's new play, based on eighteen stories by John Cheever, is Cheeveresque in name only, a skin-deep, almost sitcom-like gloss on the writer's piercingly beautiful and intensely disquieting work. The only authentic thing about the evening is the talent of the six delicious actors in the cast—John Cunningham, Mary Beth Peil, Jack Gilpin, Julie Hagerty, Robert Stanton, and Jennifer Van Dyck. Directed by Don Scardino. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes Nov. 20.)

The Cover of Life—A play by R. T. Robinson about three war brides living in Louisiana in 1943. Peter Masterson directed. (American Place Theatre, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Damn Yankees—The big musical hit of 1955 is back, in its first Broadway revival. George Abbott and Douglass Wallop's book has been jarringly updated by the director, Jack O'Brien (with the help of the hundred-and-six-year-old Mr. Abbott). But the cast, which includes Victor Garber, delivers Richard Adler and Jerry Ross's music with sporty energy, and Rob Marshall has created some lively dance numbers. (4/4/94) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

The Diva Is Dismissed—*A one-woman show with* Jenifer Lewis, formerly one of Bette Midler's Harlettes. Written by Ms. Lewis and the director Charles Randolph-Wright. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. Closes Nov. 13.)

Doctor Faustus—The Independent Theatre Company's production of Marlowe's play. (House of Candles Theatre, 99 Stanton St. 353-3088.)

Grease!—The talented cast and the inventive production team show off the gleeful phonyness of Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey's musical with unembarrassed affection, and the result is a fun fake that's not trying to pass as the real thing. Billy Porter blows the lid off the joint with his Little Richard-like rendition of "Beauty School Dropout." Maureen McCormick recently joined the cast as Rizzo. Jeff Calhoun directed and choreographed. (5/30/94) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

An Inspector Calls—J. B. Priestley's 1945 mystery is not really a play—it's a speech, about every man's link to every other man. The fine cast, which includes Kenneth Cranham, Philip Bosco, and Jane Adams, has ideas, not actions, to play. Directed by Stephen Daldry. (5/16/94) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Irish Repertory Theatre—Presenting two plays in repertory: "Mother of All the Behans," with Rosaleen Linehan, is Peter Sheridan's adaptation of Brian Behan's book, and "Alive, Alive Oh!," with Milo O'Shea and Kitty Sullivan, is an evening of songs, poetry, and dramatic excerpts, by Shaw, Beckett, Joyce, and others. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

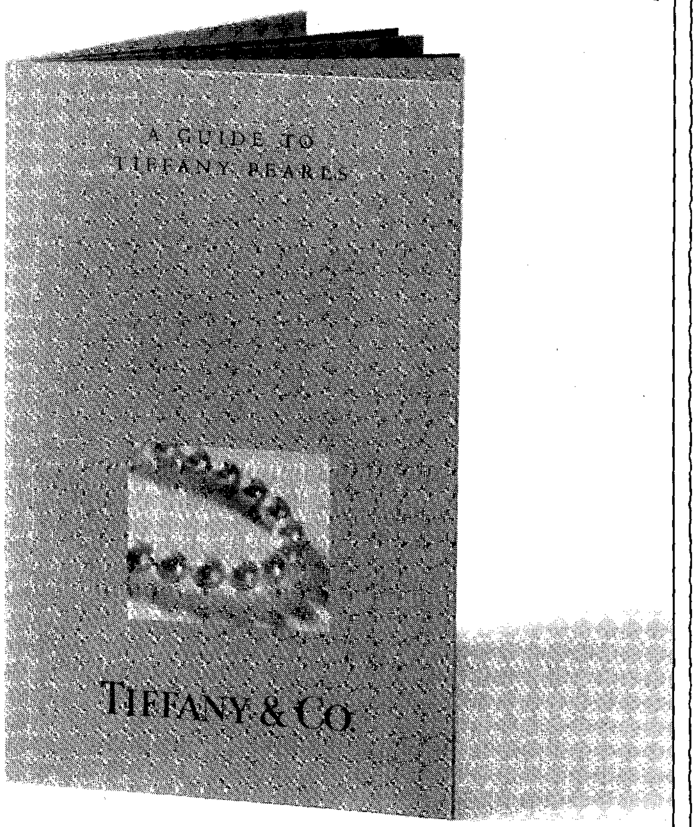
Jackie Mason: Politically Incorrect—A former rabbi from a family of rabbis, Mason uses the stage as his bully pulpit. Behind his shtick, which is sometimes vulgar but always funny, is a fundamentalist disgust at the world's fraud wickedness, hypocrisy, and inhumanity (4/25/94) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Jelly Roll!—Vernel Bagneris stars in a musical show about Jelly Roll Morton. With Morten Gunnar Larsen on piano. (47th Stree Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 265-1086.)

Killer Joe—A black comedy, set in a Texas traile park, about a son who plots to kill his mother fo the insurance money. Written by Tracy Lett and directed by Wilson Milam. (29th Stree Repertory Theatre, 212 W. 29th St. 465-0575.)

Love! Valour! Compassion!—A new play b Terrence McNally, directed by Joe Mantello With Randy Becker, Stephen Bogardus, Joh Glover, John Benjamin Hickey, Justin Kirk Nathan Lane, and Stephen Spinella. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 13 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

A Midsummer Night's Dream—Put the Ridiculous Theatrical Company and Shakespeare' comedy together and you get ridiculousnes of a very high order indeed. Under th direction of Everett Quinton (who play Bottom and Pyramus—here pronounced lik the New Jersey town of the different spelling), the large cast, featuring many vetera Ridiculi and a few newcomers, puts on well-paced and spirited performance. Th delightful, good-taste-be-damned costume are by Ramona Ponce. (Charles Ludla Theatre, 1 Sheridan Sq. 691-2271.)



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Nunsense 2: The Sequel—Dan Goggin's follow-up to the long-running musical comedy. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.)

Passion—Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's listless epistolary musical, in which the main characters spend much of their time singing love letters to and from each other. Jere Shea and Marin Mazzie are in fine voice as a dashing soldier and his lover, and Donna Murphy gives a stunning performance as Fosca, the predatory heroine. Lapine, who wrote the libretto, directed. (5/23/94) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Scarlet Letter—Phyllis Nagy's adaptation of Nathaniel Hawthorne's classic novel, with Cynthia Nixon as Hester Prynne and Stephen Caffrey as the Reverend Dimmesdale. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes Nov. 13.)

Show Boat—Harold Prince's bighearted production of the 1927 Jerome Kern-Oscar Hammerstein II musical is epic-size, full of life and full of vision. (The set features an amazingly real-looking show boat, designed by Eugene Lee.) And then there's that score, which sweeps through four decades of popular music, from operetta to ragtime to vaudeville—and includes the great existentialist anthem "Ol' Man River," here sung by Michel Bell. With John McMartin and Elaine Stritch as the patriarch and the matriarch of the floating theatre, and Lonette McKee, whose moving rendition of "Bill" is the show's most intimate moment. Also with Rebecca Luker, Mark Jacoby, Gretha Boston, Dorothy Stanley, and Joel Blum. (10/17/94) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Some People—Danny Hoch's one-man show features thirteen New York characters. Jo Bonney directed. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. Closes Nov. 13.)

That's Life!—A seriocomic revue about the variety of Jewish life in America. Thirteen composers and lyricists collaborated on the twenty musical numbers. The choreography and direction are by Helen Butleroff. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

Three Tall Women—A moving, poetic play by Edward Albee, which is dominated by the huge, heroic performance of Myra Carter. Jordan Baker and the droll and delightful Marian Seldes are also in the cast. (5/16/94) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

Uncommon Women and Others—Second Stage's revival of Wendy Wasserstein's 1977 play, directed by Carole Rothman. With Joan Buddenhagen, Julie Dretzin, Danielle Ferland, Jessica Lundy, Mary McCann, Haviland Morris, Robin Morse, Rosemary Murphy, and Stephanie Roth. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Unexpected Tenderness—A play by Israel Horovitz, with Scotty Bloch, Caitlin Clarke, Sol Frieder, Karen Goberman, Paul O'Brien, Steve Ryan, and Jonathan Marc Sherman. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523. Closes Nov. 6.)

LONG RUNS

LL IN THE TIMING: John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **ANGELS IN AMERICA:** "Millennium Approaches" and "Perestroika." (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.) . . . **BLOOD BROTHERS:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CRAZY FOR YOU:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **FAMILY SECRETS:** Westside Theatre, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **GUYS AND DOLLS:** Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **THE WHO'S TOMMY:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

Donald Byrd/The Group at Symphony Space.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

Janie Geiser & Co.—Performing "Evidence of Floods," a new, walk-through, environmental puppet-theatre work. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Nov. 3-5, beginning every quarter hour from 8 through 9:15; and Nov. 6, beginning every quarter hour from 3 through 4:15. Through Nov. 13.)

P.S. 122—Nov. 3-6 at 7:30: Carmelita Tropicana's new work, "Milk of Amnesia." Through Nov. 13. . . . ¶ Nov. 3-6 at 9: "Unending Pain," a collaborative musical work by Laurie Carlos and Diedre Murray. . . . ¶ Nov. 4-5 at 10:30: Reno, in a new show. Through Nov. 12. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

DANCE

Donald Byrd/The Group—Byrd's company performs the first edition in the "Face the Music and Dance" series. The program includes a portion of a new work, "Life Situations, Act 2," and an improvised collaboration with clarinettist Don Byron's quintet. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Nov. 3 at 8.)

Lar Lubovitch Dance Company—Nov. 2 and Nov. 4-5 at 8 and Nov. 6 at 7:30: "North Star," "Beau Danube," "So in Love," and "Concerto Six Twenty-Two." . . . ¶ Nov. 3 at 8 and Nov. 5-6 at 2: "Concerto Six Twenty-Two," "So in Love," and "Marimba." . . . ¶ Nov. 8 at 8: "North Star," "Beau Danube," "Fandango," and "A Brahms Symphony." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through Nov. 13.)

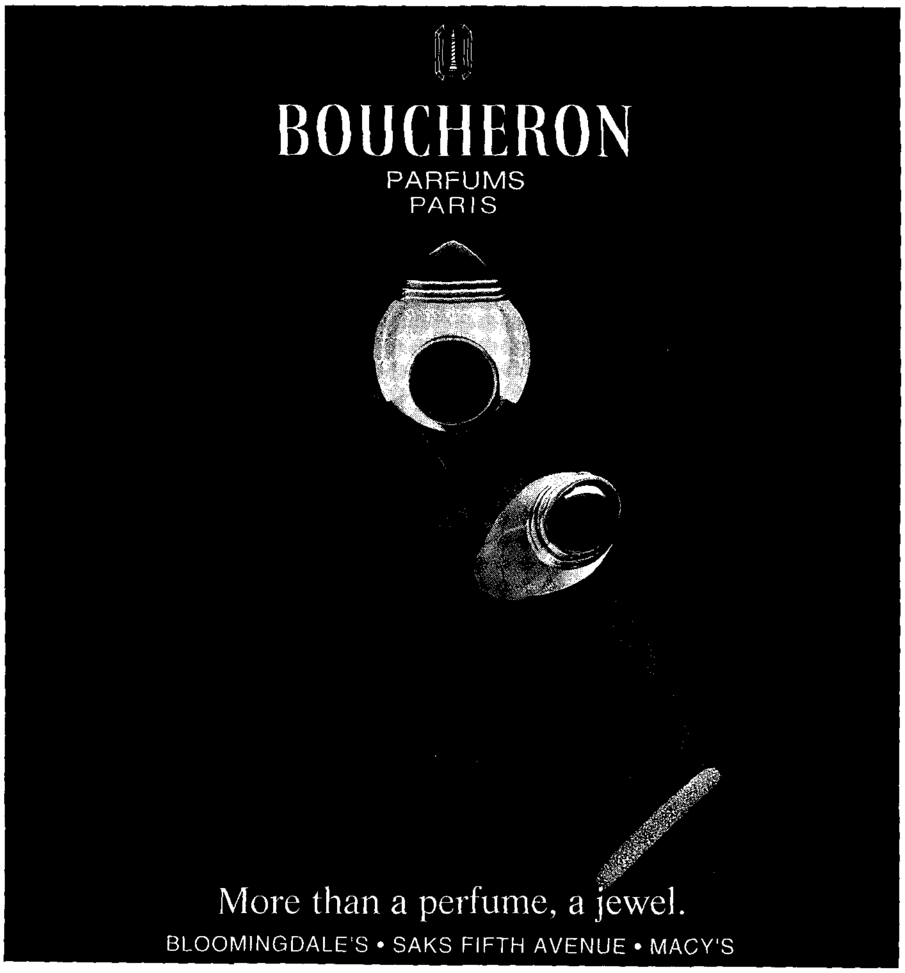
Wendy Perron Dance Company—Presenting a program of three premières. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Nov. 3-6 at 8:30.)

"The Salon Project"—The first in a series showcasing work by young choreographers, in a salon setting. (Dia Center for the Arts, 155 Mercer St. Nov. 3-4 at 8:30. Tickets at the door on the nights of the concerts.)

Malavika Sarukkai—Performing classical dance from South India, accompanied by an ensemble of musicians. (Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. 517-2742. Nov. 4-5 at 8 and Nov. 6 at 7. . . . **NOTE:** On Nov. 5 there will be a daylong symposium, including an interview with Ms. Sarukkai.)

Ritha Devi—The classical dancer from India, in "Chaturvrtti." (Lillie Blake School, 45 E. 81st St. Nov. 5 at 8. For tickets, call 988-7697.)

"Fresh Tracks"—The first performance in a series devoted to the work of five emerging choreographers. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Nov. 8 at 8.)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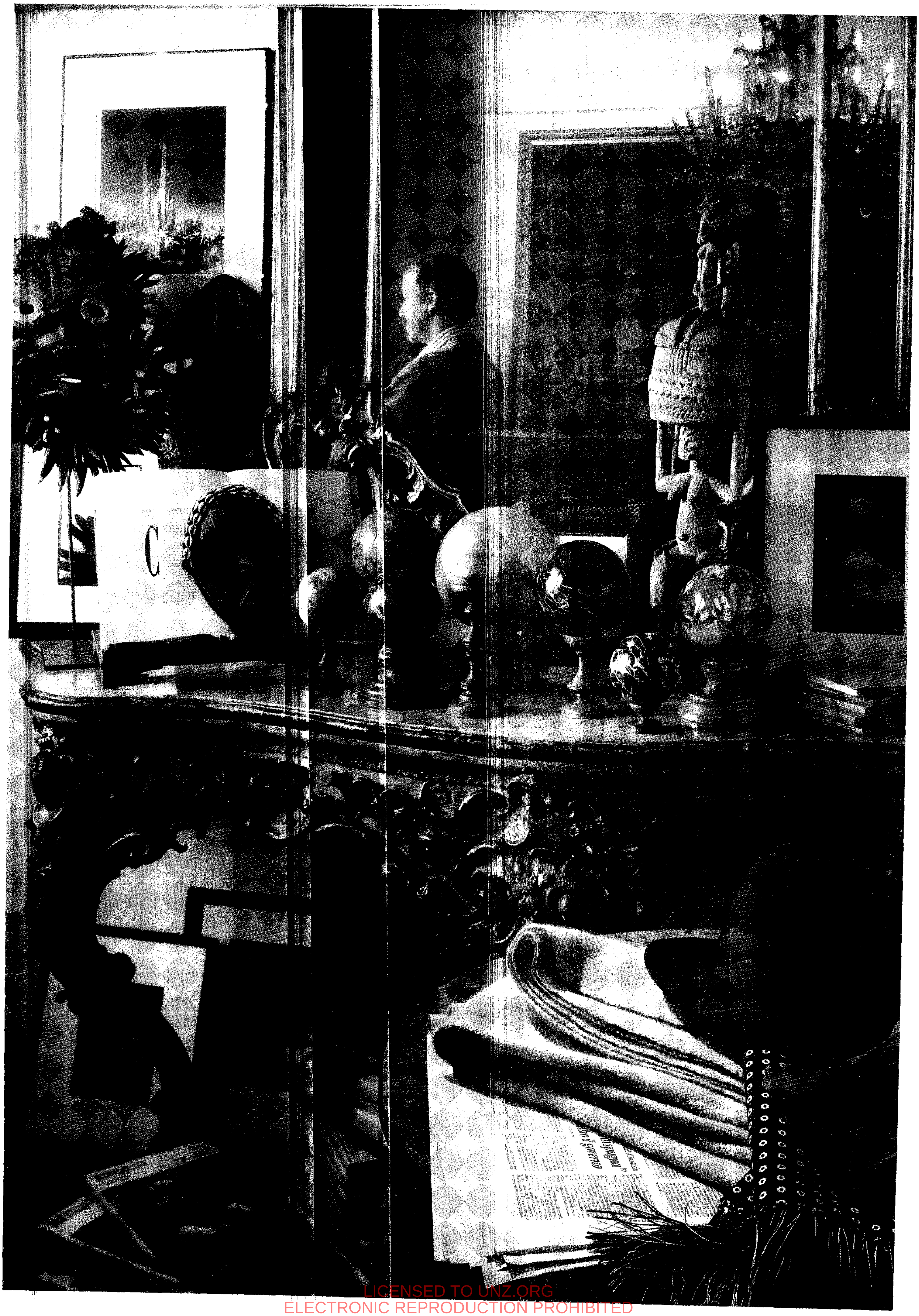


NIGHT LIFE

Seal's Progress

In 1991, after scoring a U.K. club smash ("Killer") as vocalist for the electro-soul act Adamski, the British singer Seal (his parents are Nigerian and Brazilian, and his real name is Sealhenry Samuel) had an even bigger hit with the sinuous, intoxicating dance hit "Crazy," which appeared on his first album, "Seal." Accolades, Grammy nominations, and MTV exposure followed. Alas, so did a few less fortunate developments. After taking up residence in Southern California—where the hot weather inspired him to lop off his dreadlocks and shave his majestic head—he wrecked his car, narrowly escaping serious injury, then promptly developed double pneumonia. Complicating matters further were the confusion and paranoia that sudden adulation often engenders. He witnessed a shooting on Sunset Boulevard, had a series of panic attacks, and went through an epic love affair.

Fortunately, Seal survived (with a little help from a therapist and a faith healer), and earlier this year released an impressive second album, also titled "Seal." The singer's moody, seductive voice and the state-of-the-art techno-soul production continue to evoke equal parts Terence Trent D'Arby, Peter Gabriel, and Sade. It's an alluring combination, conducive to dancing and other pleasurable forms of abandonment, and since Seal's live performances are more free-form and intense than his recordings, you'd be crazy to miss his shows at the Beacon this week, on Nov. 7-8.

CONCERTS

Nanci Griffith—On her early albums, this folk-country singer from Texas gave some listeners the impression that she was a lightweight talent. It's an idea she's been disproving with the energy and solid good taste of her recent recordings. Her latest, "Flyer," is a rich assortment of tunes, including a couple of collaborations with Counting Crows (one of them, "Going Back to Georgia," is a ravishing song that could have been an outtake from Dylan's "Blood on the Tracks"). Griffith is a seasoned live performer who puts on a thrilling show. (Richard Rodgers Theatre, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211. Nov. 2-5 at 8.)

Highlights in Jazz—Presenting Doc Cheatham and Jonah Jones in a program called "Still Going Strong." Two grand old men of the trumpet, Cheatham and Jones, prove that playing jazz can keep you lucid, in good humor, and, best of all, alive. Now enjoying a renaissance of sorts, eighty-nine-year-old Cheatham continues to astound, his still-gleaming tone encasing nuggets of refined melody. It'll be fascinating to hear how the eighty-something Jones, a mainstay of the 52nd Street club scene of the forties, sounds these days. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. Nov. 3 at 8.)

Mary Chapin Carpenter—One of the best songwriters of her generation has just delivered a new album, "Stones in the Road." Although we're all still busy evaluating the recording's contributions to the Carpenter œuvre—the first single is a rollicking ode to lust titled "Shut Up and Kiss Me"—we'll take time out from our busy schedules to line up and see how this feisty gal fares in this august concert setting. With John Gorka. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Nov. 6 at 8.)

Aretha Franklin—When the Queen of Soul comes calling, better listen up, or you may have to join the chain of fools who haven't taken advantage of a chance to hear the voice, the delivery, the sexy and mysterious thing that is Aretha. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 3 at 8.)

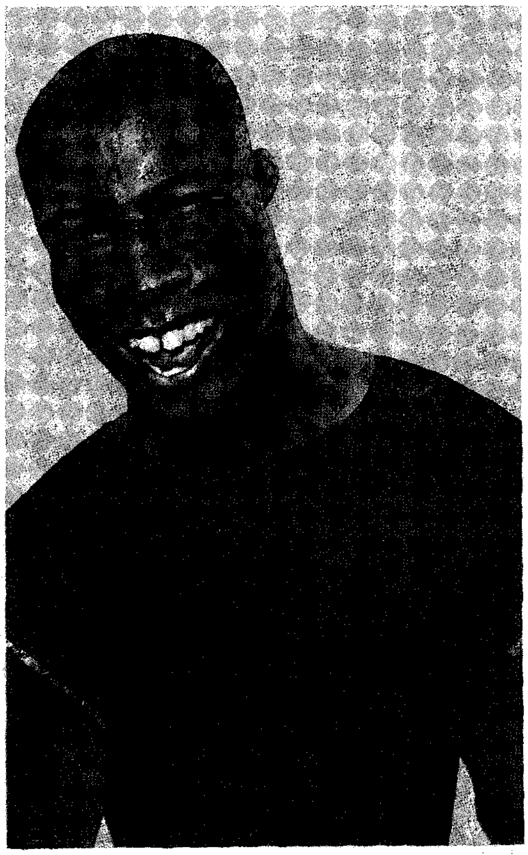
Russ Freeman & the Rippingtons—Featuring guest vocalist Jeffrey Osborne. Boney James opens. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Nov. 4 at 8.)

Marcus Roberts Trio—Colden Center, Queens College, Flushing. 1-718 793-8080. Nov. 4 at 8:30. . . . ¶ Lehman Center for the Arts, Lehman College, the Bronx. 1-718 960-8833. *Nov. 5 at 8.*

Simon Shaheen's Near Eastern Music Ensemble—Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Nov. 5 at 8.

Tito Puente's Golden Latin Jazz All-Stars—Beacon Theatre. Nov. 5 at 8.

Sweet Honey in the Rock—Carnegie Hall. Nov. 5 at 8.



Seal at the Beacon Theatre.

Tommy Flanagan—With Jimmy Woode. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Nov. 6 at 7:30. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Buddy Rich Tribute—Drummers, including Kenny Aronoff (John Mellencamp) and Omar Hakim (Sting), perform with the Buddy Rich Band. (Manhattan Center Ballroom, 311 W. 34th St. Nov. 6 at 8. For information about tickets, call 819-0576.)

Nancy Wilson—Carnegie Hall. Nov. 7 at 8.

Seal—With Des'ree. (Beacon Theatre. Nov. 7-8 at 8.)

Jazz Explosion II—A concert with Will Downing, Jonathan Butler, Bobby Lyle, Gerald Albright, and Rachelle Ferrell. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 8-9 at 8.)

CLUBS

A.K.A., 77 W. Houston St., at Wooster St. (673-7325)—Nov. 4: **groove collective.** The **authority** performs on Nov. 5.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Legendary songwriter **jimmy webb** makes an appearance on Nov. 4. Nov. 5-6: The remarkable **michael hedges** reinvents the acoustic guitar. Nov. 8: **tab benoit.** Located somewhere between Robben Ford and Stevie Ray Vaughan, this twenty-seven-year-old Lousianan plays volcanic guitar and sings the blues like a crazed preacher.

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (429-8392)—Nov. 7: The neo-punk outfit **fitz of depression** is in the house. Its début album, "Let's Give It a Twist," offers loud, nasty fun. **wig** takes over on Nov. 8.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—**fitz of depression** reappears on Nov. 8. . . .¶Next door, at CB's Gallery, Nov. 3 belongs to **elliot sharp's terraplane.**

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Nov. 3: Catch **grant lee buffalo,** with **giant sand.** "Mighty Joe Moon," the follow-up to Grant Lee Buffalo's début album, "Fuzzy"(1993), is not quite as accessible as its predecessor, but it grows on you fast. This California rock trio is simply smashing—a smart, instinctual, and passionately noisy band with an enormous bag of hooks and a powerhouse command of the big beat. Grant Lee Phillips, the lead singer, guitarist, and chief songwriter, has two key influences, Neil Young and Michael Stipe, but he's an overwhelmingly original talent. **dick dale,** a personal friend of Quentin Tarantino, and the king of surf guitar, holds court on Nov. 5, with **chris duarte.**

Kaptain Banana, 101 Greene St. (343-9000)—French cabaret *en travesti* in SoHo. Ten dancers re-create the Court of Versailles, a carnival in Rio, Marlene Dietrich, and the Andrews Sisters. There's also a singing gorilla. Dining.

Limelight, Sixth Ave. at 20th St. (807-7850)—**fates warning** arrives on Nov. 6, with former Armored Saint front man **joey vera.** Wednesday night is Disco 2000.

Manny's Car Wash, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—**luther (guitar junior) johnson** plays on Nov. 3.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—**dick dale** makes waves on Nov. 4. The **wrens** fly by on Nov. 5. Don't miss **junior brown** on Nov. 8. An old-fashioned basso-profundo crooner with a salty, poker-faced delivery, Brown is something of a country-and-Western throwback. He also happens to be a guitar hero. Live, Brown plugs in a custom-made thingamabob called a "guit-steel"—a hybrid of an electric guitar and a lap steel—and tosses off jaw-dropping solos.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Nov. 4: A night of avant-folk with **songs from a random house** and spoken word by Darius James. The **pale saints** are here on Nov. 5. Opening for the Saints is **lisa germano,** best known for her lovely, lyrical fiddling in John Mellencamp's band. In her guise as singer-songwriter, Germano puts forth haunting folk-rock that is at best delightfully dippy and at worst maddeningly obtuse. Nov. 7: **blue rodeo,** with **michael hennessey.** Nov. 8: Singer/songwriter **sam phillips** shows off the fuzzy, dusky voice and concise melodies that made her "Martinis & Bikinis" one of this years' finest albums.

Paddy Reilly's Music Bar, 519 Second Ave., at 29th St. (686-1210)—**black 47** usually plays on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and Speir Mor (Gaelic for Big Sky) performs for a hearty following on Fridays. Séisiún—a traditional Irish jam—is on Thursday nights.

Les Poulets, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The name may be French, but the music here is Latin: expect salsa, merengue, and the occasional cha-cha. **edwin rivers** is in on Nov. 2. Dining.

Sounds of Brazil, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—**gato barbieri** is here through Nov. 3. On Nov. 7: **descarga boricua,** featuring more than twenty of Puerto Rico's best players. Tuesday nights, S.O.B.'s presents Soul Kitchen, an evening of seventies funk and R. & B. for devotees of Don Cornelius. Closed Sundays. Dining.

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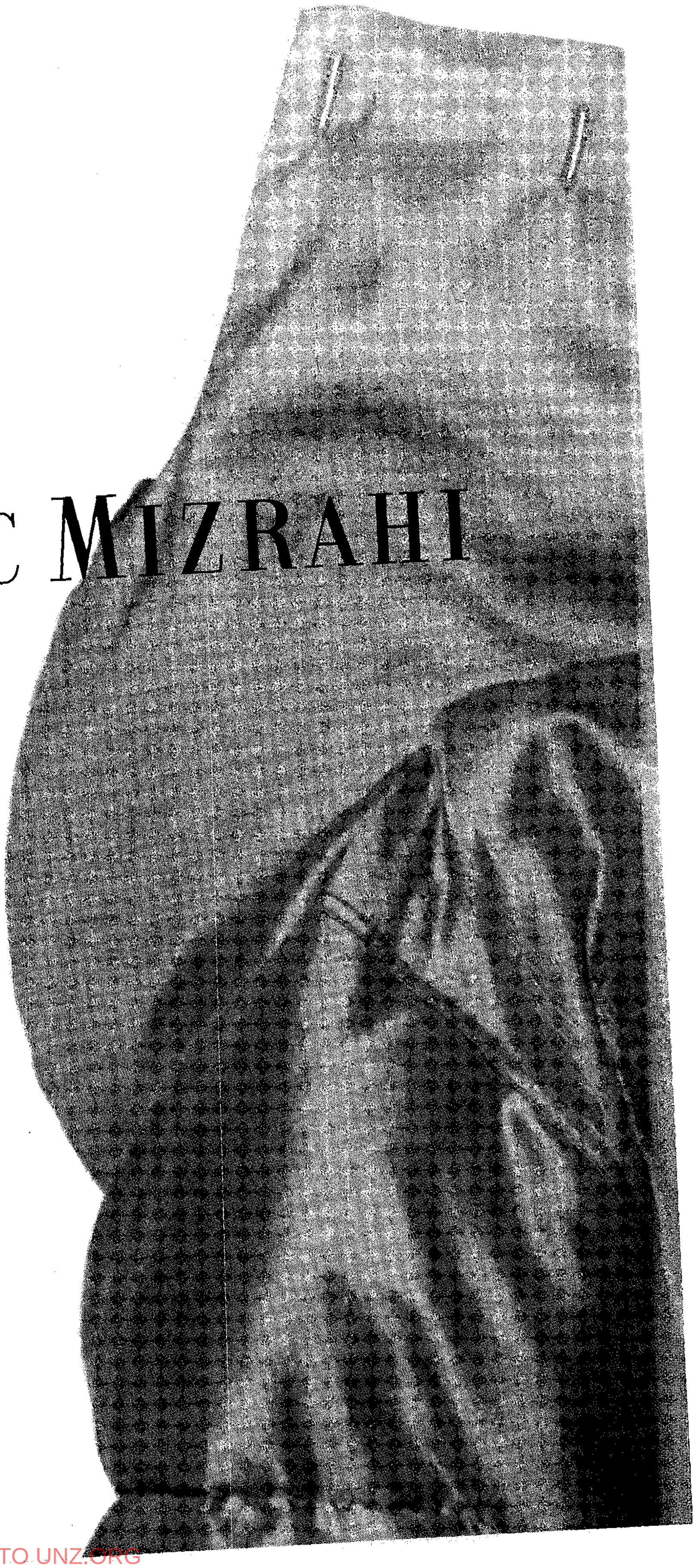
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NIGHT LIFE—*Cont'd*

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Nov. 4 belongs to alternative-rock darlings **Guided by Voices,** who, like Sebadoh, take an alarming amount of time and pleasure sabotaging their own music. With Chavez and New Radiant Storm King. Nov. 5: Local fave **Milo Z** serves up funk lite. With the **Jazzhole,** an enormous acid-jazz ensemble.

Webster Hall, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Leave it to an ex-rock critic to form a great band. The New York-based quartet **Soul Coughing,** here on Nov. 4, recently released a stunner of a début called "Ruby Vroom." Soul Coughing is fronted by former New York *Press* writer M. Doughty, who recites droll, hardboiled poetry like a b-boy Bukowski, over an addictive collage of upright bass, tentative guitar, and evocative, dislocated samples. With the **Screaming Headless Torsos.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**Weslia Whitfield** is currently at work in the woody nook known as the Oak Room. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Singer **Dianne Reeves** continues through Nov. 6. On Nov. 7: the **Sheila Jordan** trio. Jordan has been reconfiguring melody, harmony, and rhythm in her vocals for over thirty years, and the results are disarming. Her improvisational genius has rounded out this equation, making space for exposed emotion and personal sentiment. Guitarist **Stanley Jordan** begins on Nov. 8.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—On any given night, and well into the morning, one or another of New York's many formidable pianists can be found here. Case in point: **Cyrus Chestnut,** who leads a trio featuring Carl Allen and Chris Thomas, through Nov. 5. Chestnut has the impish presence and mischievous grin of an elf, but make no mistake: he's a monster. From his apprentice days with singer Betty Carter, it was obvious that Chestnut's smart and eminently funky playing portended something special, and now he's delivering on that promise.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—Time has not diminished the tasteful virtuosity of **Bobby Short's** ivory-tickling, nor has it taken the edge off his gregarious wit as a singer and showman. Now in his twenty-seventh year at the Carlyle (through New Year's Eve), Short can still spin an Ira Gershwin lyric with all the sophistication, humor, and pathos it deserves. Also well served are gems by Duke Ellington, Dorothy Fields, Irving Berlin, and, of course, Cole Porter. A de-lightful, de-lovely evening. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Barbara Carroll** presides at the piano. Carroll's timing is infallible, and she is equally at ease with legato figures and double-time sprints. Her repertoire, which changes like the wind, has been known to include a long, wonderful "Porgy and Bess," a funny "Sweet Georgia Brown," and a lilting, secret "Here's That Rainy Day."

The Cooler, 416 W. 14th St. (229-0785)—Nov. 4: An excellent, eclectic evening of avant-jazz, exploding guitars, and collapsing saxophones. **Marc Ribot's Shrek** is like something heard at a carnival in Eastern Europe: odd modes, hand drums, hurdy-gurdies, and a few modern touches, like Slavic surf and the occasional wall of feedback. **Arto Lindsay** (who will be performing solo) spent the past year producing records for David Byrne and the Brazilian singer Marisa Monte, and the experience has served him well. Hidden beneath Lindsay's hipster-doofus persona beats the heart of sensitive songwriter, and, like Byrne, his recent gigs have been far more honest and unfettered than his precious I'll-just-play-one-string-all-night tinkering with the Ambitious Lovers. Defying the conventional range of the baritone saxophone, **Hamiett Bluiett** (who leads a quartet) can coax unnatural and beautiful sounds from his cumbersome instrument. Whether growling like a bullfrog or screaming like a siren, he grounds his explorations in the bedrock of blues and gospel. Catch a member of the great World Saxophone Quartet on a busman's holiday. Mondays in November, members of the Screaming Headless Torsos curate a free evening of noise and art. Wednesday nights are given over to experimental d.j. spinoffs.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7900)—**Laverne Butler** is here through Nov. 6. Starting Nov. 8: the **Mose Allison** trio. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **Les Paul** leads a trio. Dining.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A cool, sumptuous piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel. Wednesdays through Saturdays, **Donald Johnston** is the featured pianist. Dining.

Five Spot, 4 W. 31st St. (631-0100)—Nov. 2: **Roy Meriwether.** Nov. 3-5: R. & B.-flavored jazz with **Jareese.** Dining.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—**Bross Townsend** and **Earl May** team up through Nov. 5. On Nov. 6: **Gene Lees, Kenny Ascher,** and **David Finck** join forces.

Knitting Factory, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—The **Either/Orchestra,** a ten-piece, Boston-based ensemble, swings by on Nov. 4. **Anthony Braxton** begins a six-night run on Nov. 8.

Le Madeleine, 403 W. 43rd St. (246-2993)—Every Sunday evening, guitar great **Gene Bertoncini** lights up this cozy Hell's Kitchen bistro with his simmering melodicism and chordal grace.

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—On Mondays, Woody Allen continues his night job as clarinet player in the **New Orleans Funeral and Ragtime Orchestra,** a Dixieland-jazz ensemble. Closed Sundays.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A plush, old-fashioned night club, sixty-five floors above it all, complete with Art Deco fixtures, intimate glitter, and a panoramic view as dizzying as the tab. **Amanda Mc Broom** holds forth through Nov. 12. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor and swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Michael Andrew and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

Russian Tea Room, 150 W. 57th St. (265-0947)—Borscht, blini, and other things to make the heart beat faster. Nov. 6: **Marti Stevens.**

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—The **Steve Turre** sextet continues through Nov. 6. Beginning Nov. 8: the **Mal Waldron** quintet. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter **Miles Evans** is in action on Mondays. Dining.

Tavern on the Green, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—Through Nov. 6: the **Harry (Sweets) Edison** quartet. By extracting the essence within the essence, trumpeter Edison has devised a style of epigrammatic eloquence. His chiselled solos with Count Basie's band and the easy lyricism of his obbligatos on Frank Sinatra's classic Capitol recordings still resound throughout Sweets' minimalist poetry. Vocalist **Kenny Coleman** begins a one-week engagement on Nov. 8.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The **George Coleman** quartet holds forth through Nov. 6. Coleman is a didactic marvel: there isn't a sax player who knows his instrument better, or one who feels as compelled to impart so much knowledge in every marathon solo. Coleman is matched in drive and vigor by his longtime pianist, Harold Mabern, and his bassist, Jamil Nasser, one of New York's great unsung swingers. The **Benny Green** trio begins a one-week run on Nov. 8. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

Visiones, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—Through Nov. 6: **Chico Freeman** and **Arthur Blythe** head up a sextet (and make a live record on Nov. 4-5).

ART

Perfect Squares

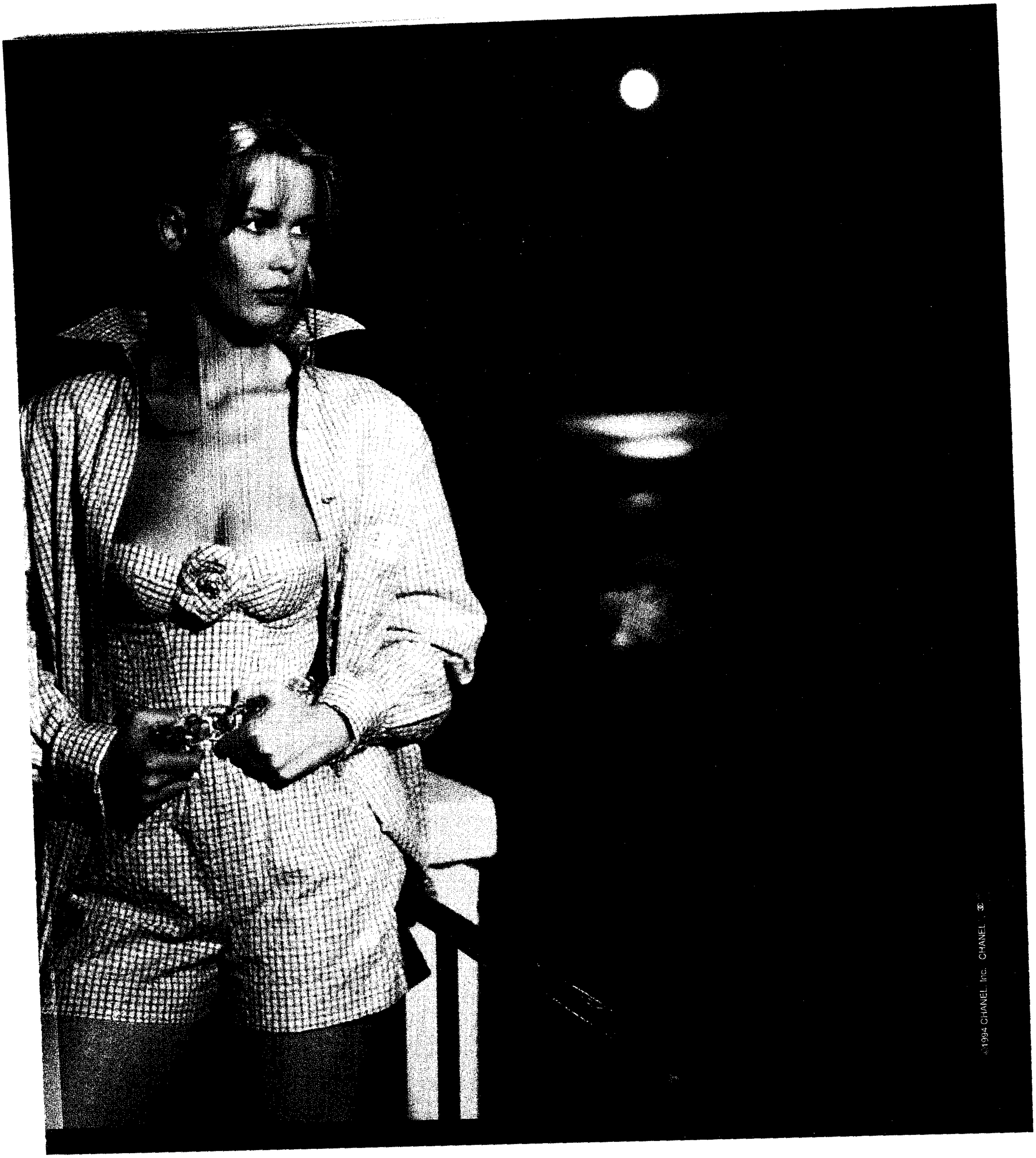
If proof were ever needed that status symbols existed before the advent of Rolex and Mercedes-Benz, the gorgeous silk-and-gold-embroidered rank badges on display at the China Institute (through December 22) could do the job. Never ones to pass up an opportunity for pomp and splendor, mandarins at the imperial court during the Ming and Qing dynasties (from the late-fourteenth to early-twentieth centuries) wore these masterpieces of needlework on their robes. The twelve-inch-square badges proclaimed their status with exactitude and clarity, and delineated the bureaucratic pecking order.

The symbolism has the usual Chinese felicity. Civil servants were identified with auspicious birds, from the crane (first rank) to the paradise flycatcher (ninth rank). Military officers wore emblems with ferocious wild beasts—leopards and tigers and bears. The insignia of the imperial censors, whose job was to root out enemies of the state, was the image of a fabulous creature called the *xiezhai*, which supposedly had the ability to recognize liars, whom it promptly impaled on its single, curved horn.

The craftsmanship was exquisite. The backgrounds of many of the badges are heavily worked, in a technique known as *couching:* gold was beaten feather-thin and wrapped around threads, which were then laid down as embroidery. Iridescent peacock feathers were used in the same way, and coral beads and seed pearls were added, giving the badges a dazzling opulence that would put many a twentieth-century couturier to shame.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Willem de Kooning: Paintings." A major retrospective of one of the most accomplished and influential artists New York has ever produced, at the city's premier museum, must be hyped and mobbed to the bursting point, right? Wrong. This exhibition of the great Abstract Expressionist's masterworks, which originated at the National Gallery, in Washington, has opened here without much of a bang. But you won't find more exciting painting anywhere in town. The New York exhibition has been augmented by several canvases that weren't seen in Washington, including "Marilyn Monroe" (1954), a powerful evocation of soft female sexuality. Unlike most of the terrifying de Kooning women, it's actually alluring. . . . ¶ "The Photographs of Édouard Baldus: Landscapes and Monuments of France." Shots from the nineteenth century. . . . ¶ "Origins of Impressionism" begins with paintings seen at the historic and influential Salon of 1859 and includes nudes, landscapes, and still-lifes. . . . ¶ Gowns daywear, and costume jewelry by Mme. Grès a French designer active from 1930 to 1988 are on display in the Costume Institute There's evidence of a singular mind at work here, a far-reaching talent that gathered material and ideas from all over the world Mme. Grès's designs include elements o saris, caftans, and kimonos, but ultimately



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she made each garment her own. The red-orange silk-jersey evening gown with diagonal pleats across the torso is stunning in its simplicity. Through Nov. 27. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Rem Koolhaas and the Place of Public Architecture." Opens Nov. 3. . . . ¶ Curator Rob Storr's exhibition, "Mapping," is devoted to the role of cartographic fact and fantasy in contemporary art. Storr's catalogue essay tips its hat to Borgesian whimsy and then goes on to teach us that maps reflect geopolitical tensions, north/south and east/west prejudices, etc. He has assembled some first-rate art works, including excellent examples of conceptual-oriented works of the sixties and seventies by Smithson, LeWitt, and Broodthaers. . . . ¶ "American Politicians: Photographs from 1843 to 1993." . . . ¶ "Cy Twombly: A Retrospective." Nearly a hundred works, mostly paintings, by this heir to Abstract Expressionism. (A concurrent show of his works is at the Gagosian gallery.) . . . ¶ "The Prints of Louise Bourgeois" focusses on the artist's etchings and lithographs. . . . ¶ "A Century of Artists Books." (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"The Italian Metamorphosis, 1943-68." (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, from 10 to 6, and Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway—"Japanese Art After 1945: Scream Against the Sky." (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

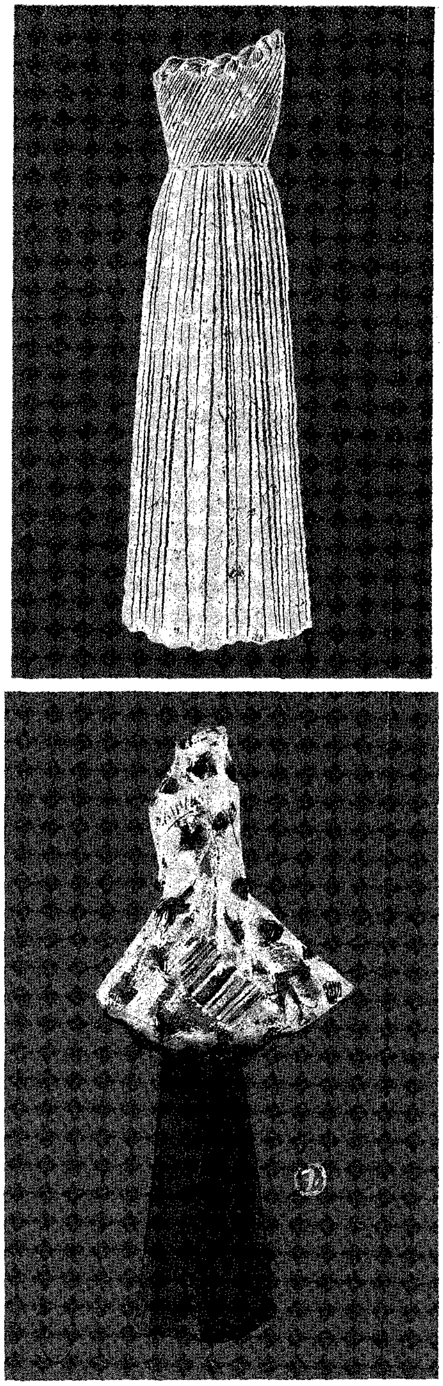
Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Jess: A Grand Collage, 1951-1993." Jess's world has room for everything. The quirky Bay Area collagist and painter's work falls into three categories: dense phantasmagoric collages, painstakingly pieced together from the artist's enormous collection of visual sources; "Salvages," found canvases over which the artist has painted a second image; and "Translations," heavily impastoed oils that faithfully transfer onto canvas found images such as Victorian engravings, a photograph of the Beatles, medical illustrations, etc. . . . ¶ "Neil Jenney: Natural Rationalism." (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"Royal Tombs of Sipán." Gold, silver, and gilded copper objects of the Moche, a pre-Inca civilization of northern Peru and one of the world's major ancient civilizations. The curators are probably right to identify Sipán as the richest burial site ever excavated in the New World. . . . ¶ "Empires Beyond the Great Wall: The Heritage of Genghis Khan." The exhibit includes documents, ornamental plates, weapons, and silk garments from the steppes. There are also full-sized replicas of a Mongolian nobleman's recently excavated tomb and a modern yurt. Through Nov. 27. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"Realms of Heroism: Indian Paintings at the Brooklyn Museum." . . . ¶ Dale Chihuly's "The Brooklyn Wall," an installation of blown glass, is on view in the lobby. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—"Revivals! Diverse Traditions: 1920-45." The second installment in a project devoted to American craft in the twentieth century. . . . ¶ "Form and Light: Contemporary Glass from the Permanent Collection." (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St.—"Passage to Vietnam: Through the Eyes of Seventy Photographers." Through Nov. 20. . . . ¶ "An Enduring Legacy: The Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection." Every piece in what may well be the last great collection of Asian art coolly proclaims quality: a Korean stoneware jar is indescribably elegant; a copper sculpture from India—Krishna dancing over a vanquished demon, its serpentine tail echoing the god's heavenly form—is a little ode to joy. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, noon to 5.)



"Madame Grès," at the Metropolitan Museum.

Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse—"Cartographies: Fourteen Artists from Latin America." (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—"At the Dragon Court." Chinese embroidery from the collection of Schuyler V. R. Cammann. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—"Good Offices and Beyond: The Evolution of the Workplace" focusses on how the offices of the seventies and eighties incorporated the technological advances of those decades. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St.—"Worlds Envisioned: Alighiero e Boetti and Frédéric Bruly Bouabré." . . . ¶ "Andy Warhol: The Last Supper Paintings." . . . ¶ Irish artist James Coleman's "Projected Images, 1972-94" includes "La Tache Aveugle," "Seeing for Oneself," and "I.N.I.T.I.A.L.S." . . . ¶ "Rest," by Franz West, an installation of twenty-seven couches on the center's roof. (Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

Fraunces Tavern Museum, 54 Pearl St.—"Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Rise of Black Churches in Eastern American Cities, 1740-1877." Through Nov. 27. (Open Mondays through Fridays, 10 to 5:45; Saturdays, noon to 4.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—Sèvres porcelain, Limoges enamel, and paintings by Vermeer, Rembrandt, Whistler, and El Greco are all on view in this former residence of Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919). (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Grolier Club, 47 E. 60th St.—"100 Books Famous in Medicine" documents the evolution of medicine, from Hippocrates to the CAT scan. Through Nov. 23. (Open daily, except Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—"Jewish Life in Tsarist Russia: A World Rediscovered." . . . ¶ "Mario Cavaglieri: The Glittering Years, 1912-22" features thirty-six paintings, both interiors and portraits, by Cavaglieri (1887-1969), an Italian Jew, whose work recalls the bright colors and thick brushwork of the Fauves. (Open Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 11 to 5:45; Tuesdays, 11 to 8.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—"The Thaw Collection: Master Drawings and New Acquisitions." The word "great" is overused in the art world: it should be reserved for occasions like this one. This collection, a promised gift to the Morgan, ranges freely from Mantegna to Jackson Pollock. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

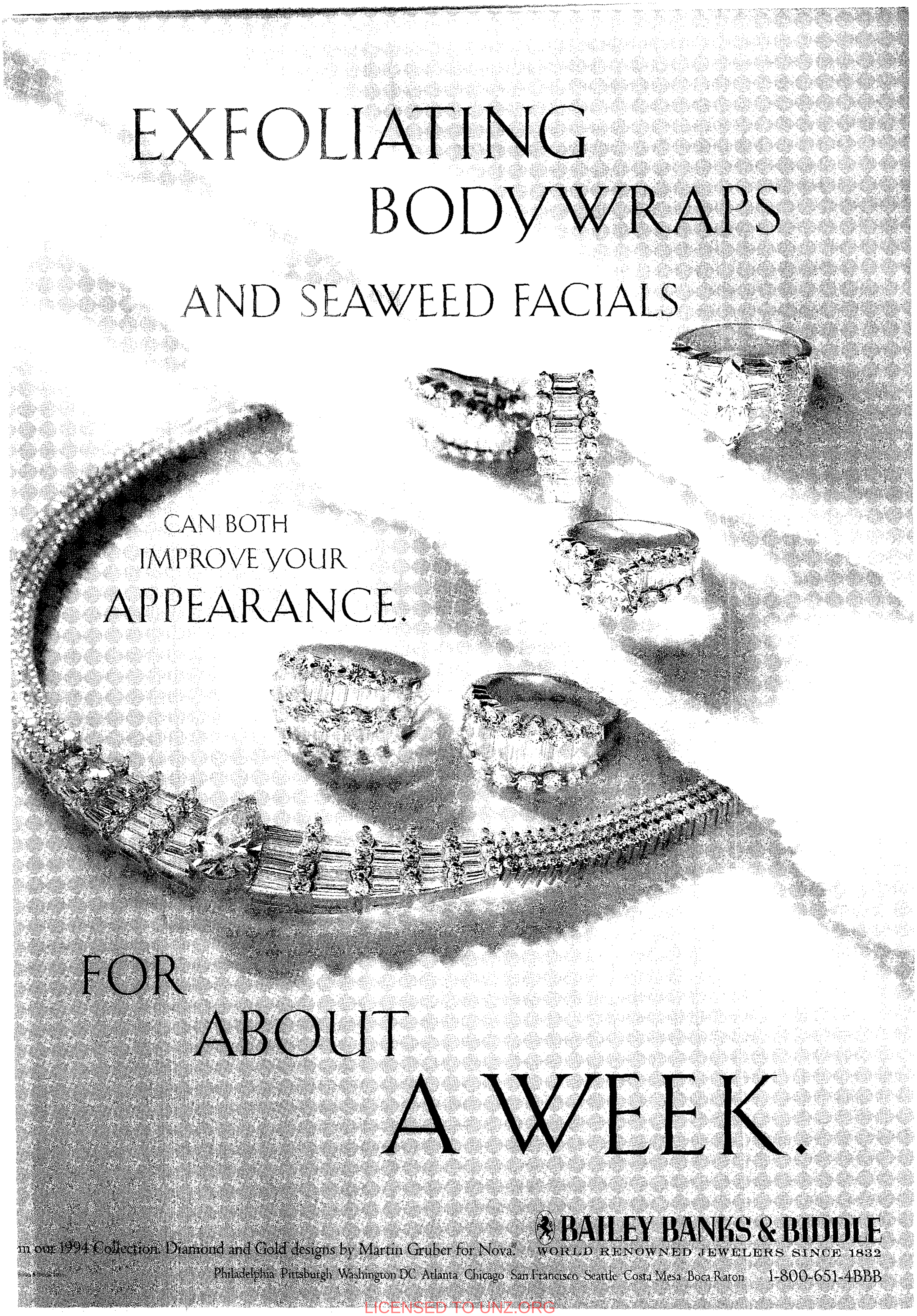
Museo del Barrio, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—"Recovering Popular Culture," the second part of the series "Artists Talk Back: Visual Conversations with El Museo," includes a bodega exhibit, work by contemporary craftspeople, and an exhibit pairing work from the permanent collection with that of contemporary artists. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

Museum for African Art, 593 Broadway—"Exhibition-*ism*: Museums and African Art." (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5:30; Saturdays, noon to 8; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Museum of American Folk Art, Columbus Ave. at 65th St.—"Every Picture Tells a Story: Word and Image in American Folk Art." Everything from a pre-Revolutionary illustrated birth certificate to a more contemporary text: "Try Me," painted on tin roofing. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11:30 to 7:30.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—"Recent Acquisitions: Presents of the Past." . . . ¶ "A New York Holiday." . . . ¶ "The Making of a Mural: Reginald Marsh at the Custom House." (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Altered States: Conservation, Analysis, and the Interpretation of Works of Art." Through Nov. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5; Friday evenings until 8, with no admission charge after 5.)



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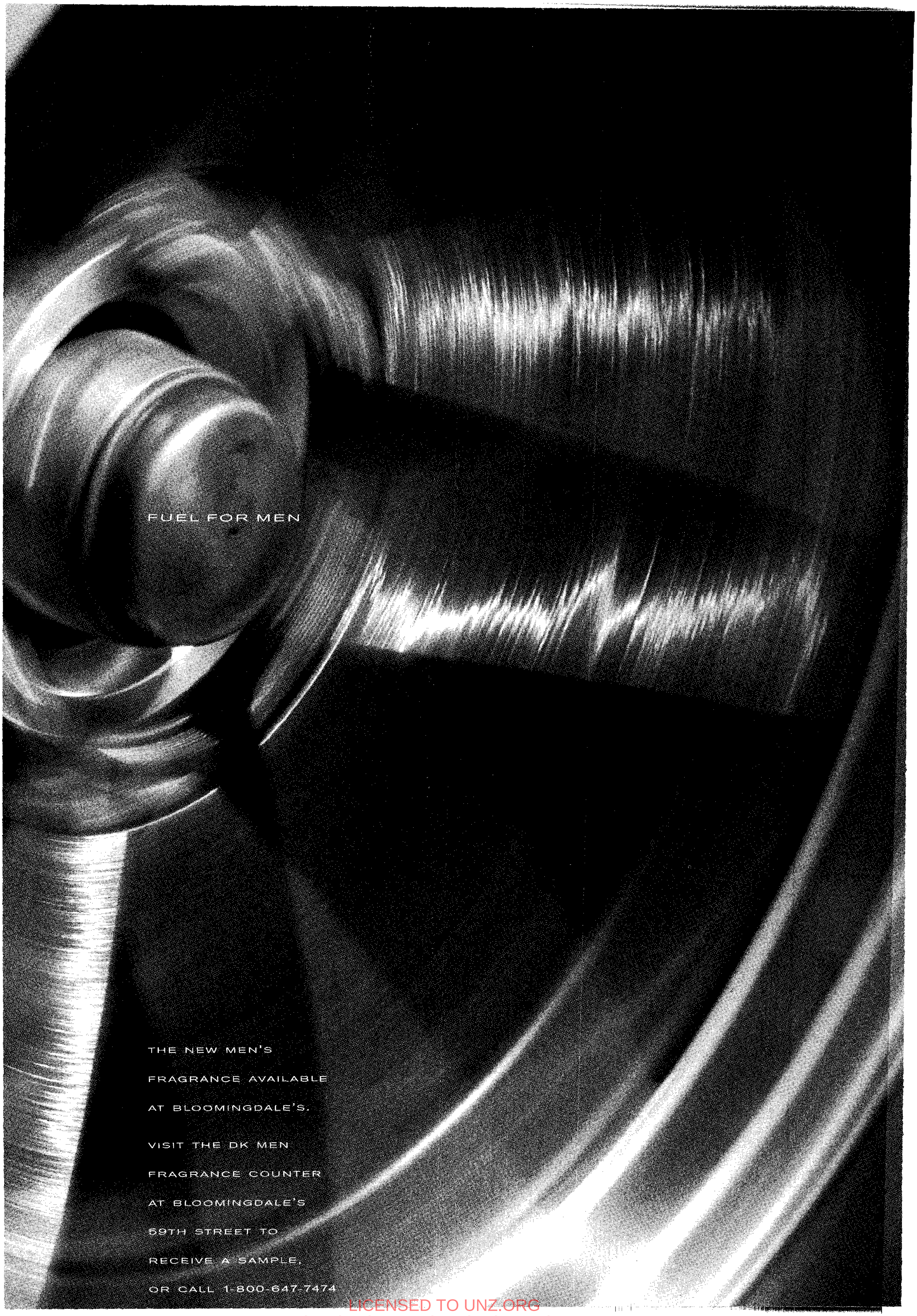

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ART—Cont'd

National Museum of the American Indian, 1 Bowling Green—"Creation's Journey: Masterworks of Native American Identity and Belief." . . . ¶ "All Roads Are Good: Native Voices on Life and Culture." . . . ¶ "This Path We Travel: Celebrations of Contemporary Native American Creativity." (Open daily, 10 to 5:30.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"e.e. cummings @ 100: An Anniversary Exhibition." . . . ¶ "The Raw and the Cooked: Images of Food from the Renaissance to the Present." On the menu are a Dürer engraving of Adam and Eve sharing an apple, and a Berenice Abbott photograph of potatoes. (Mondays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center—"Screams on Screen: 100 Years of Horror Films." . . . ¶ "New Performance in Found Spaces: Documentary Photographs by Tom Brazil and Dona Ann McAdams." (Open Mondays and Thursdays, noon to 8; Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, noon to 6.)

Schomburg Center, 515 Lenox Ave., at 135th St.—"Invoking the Spirit: Worship Traditions in the African World." Photographs by Chester Higgins, Jr. (Open Mondays through Wednesdays, noon to 8; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—"From the Studio: Artists-in-Residence, 1993-94" features work by Bright Bimpong, Russell Malcolm Hamilton, and Marilyn Nance. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. The following lists lead off with new shows.)

Laura Levine—The Brooklyn-born, Chinatown-bred artist and photographer presents a series of paintings titled "Don't Fence Me In," featuring scenes of Western-frontier life. Levine's bright-colored adaptations of folk art have appeared in magazines and on rock-album covers. Opens Nov. 3. Through Nov. 27. (121 Greene Street Gallery.)

Ken Sofer—Painted modular wooden boxes, with steel and rubber elements. Opens Nov. 3. Through Dec. 3. (M-13, at 72 Greene St.)

"It's How You Play the Game"—A conceptual project in which five curators of contemporary art will add and subtract various works over the course of the first five weeks. For the final five weeks, all of the works will remain on view. Opens Nov. 5. Through Jan. 28. (Exit Art, 548 Broadway. Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 8; Fridays, 10 to 10; and Saturdays, 11 to 10.)

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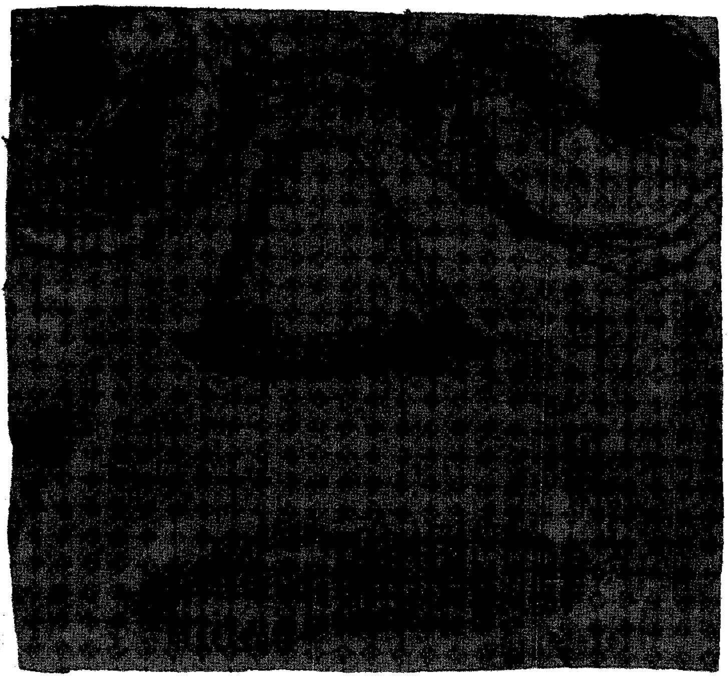
Susan Rothenberg—A dozen paintings reflecting the artist's surroundings in Galisteo, New Mexico, where she lives on a ranch with her husband, Bruce Nauman. Fragmented images of animals, shards of pottery, skulls and bones—and, in "Calling the Dogs," clapping hands—are incorporated into heavily reworked abstract grounds. Through Dec. 17. (Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St.)

"Return of the Hero"—Works by two generations of German painters, including Georg Baselitz, Sigmar Polke, Gerhard Richter, and Martin Kippenberger, in an unusually complex and rewarding group show. The notion of heroism advanced in these works is ambivalent, divided between affirmation and deflation, defiance and resignation. A measure of sincerity in Baselitz's neo-expressionism is counterbalanced by Richter's pastiches of abstract and representational modes. These shifting dichotomies are played out in a variety of traditional and unconventional mediums—Polke's "Indian with Eagle" (1975), for instance, is acrylic on Lurex. Through Dec. 17. (Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St.)



Self-portrait by Susan Rothenberg (Sperone Westwater).

Richard Artschwager—Constructions made of unfinished planks and plywood, suggestive of furniture. Through Dec. 17. (Boone, 417 West Broadway.)

Thornton Dial—Recent works on paper by a self-taught Alabama artist. Through Nov. 26. (Ricco/Maresca, 152 Wooster St.)

Ellsworth Kelly—Recent paintings in the inaugural show of a new satellite space for the uptown gallery. Through Jan. 29. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

Martin Kippenberger—Abstract bronze reliefs mounted in boxes. Through Dec. 3. (Nolan-Eckman, 560 Broadway.)

Dennis Oppenheim—Witty conceptual floor and wall sculptures, many of them kinetic. (Blum Helman Warehouse, 80 Greene St.)

Lucas Samaras—Gray Formica sculptures shaped like cubes and trapezoids. Through Nov. 26. (Pace, 142 Greene St.)

Cy Twombly—"Untitled Painting," a monumental, primarily abstract triptych, begun in Italy in 1979. Through Dec. 17. (A retrospective of the artist's work is at the Museum of Modern Art.) (Gagosian, 136 Wooster St.)

Rudolf Stingel—Enormous abstract paintings. Through Nov. 26. (Cooper, 155 Wooster St.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Antoine-Louis Barye (1795-1875)—Works by the nineteenth-century French animalier. Opens Nov. 4. Through Dec. 9. (Wildenstein, 19 E. 64th St. Open Mondays; closed Saturdays. A benefit show; general admission is three dollars.)

William Merritt Chase (1849-1916)—A survey of the American Impressionist's career inaugurates the gallery's new space. Opens Nov. 2. Through Jan. 31. (Spanierman, 45 E. 58th St.)

Tibor Csernus—Large watercolors of isolated figures, by a Hungarian artist. Opens Nov. 5. Through Dec. 3. (Stiebel Modern, 32 E. 57th St.)

Richard Diebenkorn (1922-93)—Small paintings of figures, still-lifes, and landscapes, done during a representational period in the artist's career, from 1956 to 1963. Opens Nov. 3. Through Dec. 3. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St.)

Judy Glantzman—Paintings of female figures, investigating female adolescence and womanhood. Opens Nov. 3. Through Dec. 3. (Blum Helman, 20 W. 57th St.)

"American Modernism, 1920s-40s"—Approximately thirty paintings, drawings, and sculptures by Georgia O'Keeffe, Joseph Stella, William Zorach, and others. Opens Nov. 5. Through Dec. 23. (Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St.)

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Kim Dingle—Remember Freud's "The Sexual Enlightenment of Children"? Dingle does, and, like her fellow-Californians Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy, she mines this territory for whatever residual shock value and sour laughter it can sustain. Her current show, "the priss papers," consists of several large oils on wallpaper and an installation of life-size figures; they feature little girls and babies engaged in worrisome shenanigans. The tension between Dingle's naughty-girl images and the saccharine kiddie-wallpaper background on which they are painted seems rather pat, but her handling of paint itself has a fleshy exuberance. Through Nov. 12. (Tilton, 24 W. 57th St.)

Joan Mitchell (1926-92)—After her father's death in 1963, Mitchell produced a series she called "my black paintings." Of course, being Mitchells, they're not black at all; they are luminous and shot through with clouds of color. Yet they are melancholy, built up from overlapping masses of clotted pigment, with none of the artist's usual delicacy. " 'Cheim' Some Bells" is a brooding presence; one of the most heavily worked canvases she has ever painted, it has a mysterious surface that is glaucous, like a perfect plum. Through Nov. 12. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

Robert Berlind—Paintings of reflections in streams and ponds. Through Nov. 26. (De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St.)

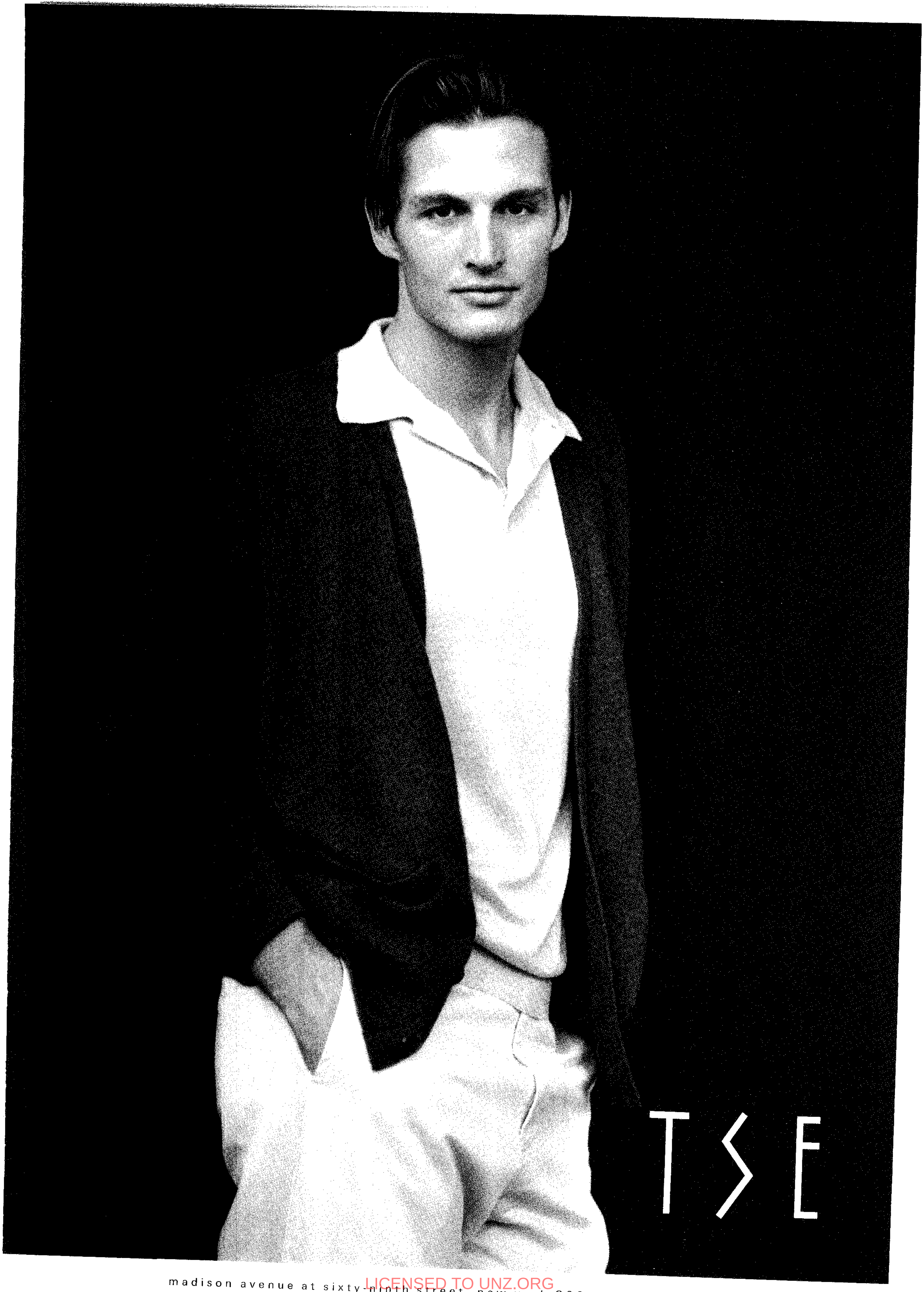
Corneille—Paintings and works on paper by a founder of the Cobra group, some of which reveal primitive influences. Through Nov. 27. (Avanti, 22 E. 72nd St. Open Mondays.)

William King—A retrospective covering forty years of work in wood. Through Nov. 26. (Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St.)

Barnett Newman (1905-70) / **Kiki Smith**—Paintings and drawings from 1944, when Newman resumed his career after a wartime hiatus, to 1949. / Collages and lithographs—new mediums for the artist—depicting body parts. Through Nov. 26. (Pace, 32 E. 57th St.)

Richard Serra—Black-and-white crayon-stick drawings of loose rectangles. Through Dec. 23. (Gagosian, Madison Ave. at 76th St.)

"Sculpture: The Figure Transformed"—A show including a wide range of artists: Willem de Kooning, Joel Shapiro, Kiki Smith, and others. Through Dec. 17. (Mathes, 41 E. 57th St.)



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AUCTIONS

Elliott Endowment—A sale of thirty-six works from the redoubtable collection of Gerald S. Elliott, a prominent Chicago lawyer who died last March, will lead Christie's fall contemporary-art season. Both American and European artists are represented, among them Frank Stella, whose painting "Ileana Sonnabend" (1963) is up for $400,000-$600,000; Robert Gober, whose sculpture "Double Sink" (1984) is expected to garner $120,000-$180,000; and Georg Baselitz, whose painting "Das Malerbild" (1987-88), is estimated at $300,000-$400,000. (502 Park Ave., at 59th St. 546-1000. Nov. 2 at 7 and Nov. 3 at 10 A.M.)

Illustration Art—The fall auction at Illustration House focusses on magazine- and book-cover art, from the lowbrow to the highbrow, i.e, from Charles Addams' cartoon for an issue of *TV Guide* (circa 1980; estimate: $1,500-$2,500) to Reginald Marsh's frontispiece for the 1945 edition of John Dos Passos's "U.S.A." (estimate: $6,000-$9,000). (96 Spring St. 966-9444. Nov. 5 at 1.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Robert Frank—Twenty-seven rarely seen images from the photographer of "The Americans." Through Nov. 23. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St.)

Gjon Mili (1904-84)—Photographs of actors, entertainers, and other celebrities, taken between 1930 and 1970. Through Dec. 3. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St.)

Isabel Muñoz—Photographs of flamenco and tango dancing in Madrid and Buenos Aires. Through Nov. 12. (Saul, 560 Broadway.)

Mario Cravo Neto—Black-and-white prints by a Brazilian photographer. Through Dec. 3. (Witkin, 415 West Broadway.)

Nicholas Nixon—Photographs of schoolchildren and nurses. Through Nov. 26. (Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

Richard Rothman—Photographs of abject, urban landscapes and architecture. Through Nov. 6. (White Columns, 154 Christopher St.)

Leo Rubinfien—Photographs taken from airplanes. Through Dec. 10. (Mann, 42 E. 76th St.)

Nick Waplington—More than ten large-scale works by an artist best known for surreptitiously placing images of himself within his landscape photography. Through Dec. 3. (Burden, 20 E. 23rd St.)

Garry Winogrand—New York City burlesque houses, circa 1954. Through Nov. 26. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St.)

Doris Ulmann (1882-1934)—Vintage images of the Appalachia and Gullah regions of South Carolina. Through Dec. 3. (Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St.)

International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave. at 94th St.—A retrospective of the work of Cornell Capa, featuring work from *Life* and other magazines. . . . ¶ Forty images of contemporary Russian life, by Hans-Jürgen Burkhard. Through Nov. 27. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St.—"Talking Pictures," an exhibition that features photographs by more than fifty people not generally associated with the medium—Mario Cuomo, Jesse Jackson, Diane Keaton—and taped commentaries on the work. . . . ¶ Photographs by Arthur Rothstein, who is best known for his work for *Look*. . . . ¶ More than thirty black-and-white photographs of Appalachian Kentuckians, by Shelby Lee Adams. Through Nov. 27. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Asia Society, the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts and the Schomburg Center.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

They Ought to Be in Pictures

EVER since Saint-Saëns penned the first film score, for a 1908 featurette called "L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise," music and the movies have been fast friends. Silent-movie pianists or organists—or even orchestras—became fixtures of pre-talkie theatres, providing accompaniments that ranged from clichéd improvisations to original scores minutely reflecting the screen action. The Manhattan School of Music Orchestra will go to the movies three times this season, with the "cinemusicologist" Gillian Anderson conducting them in soundtracks for otherwise silent films, at the Metropolitan Museum. The series opens on November 4 with Cecil B. De Mille's hour-long "Carmen," a 1915 film based on the same Mérimée novella that inspired Bizet's famous opera. The score, arranged by Hugo Riesenfeld, captures many of Bizet's most luminous moments, and *diva assoluta* Geraldine Farrar boldly vamps the title role, smoking the ciggies and taking the knife.

In December, Farrar's frequent co-star Enrico Caruso will also be seen in a silent role, as the lead of the 1919 Swedish film "My Operatic Cousin," which is slated to close the Brooklyn Museum's five-week festival of operatic films, which will open on November 10. (Call 1-718 638-5000, ext. 230, for information.) The highlights will be many, thanks to the celluloid performances of such headliners as Giovanni Martinelli, Elisabeth Schumann, Lily Pons, Marian Anderson, Jussi Bjørling, Victoria de los Angeles, Eleanor Steber, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Leontyne Price, Cesare Siepi, Joan Sutherland, Shirley Verrett, Grace Bumbry, and Beverly Sills. Circle December 10 in red: that's when tenor Eugene Tobin will reminisce (in person) about the estimable "Tosca" he sang in Stuttgart with Renata Tebaldi and George London in 1961, a film of which, recently issued commercially by VAI, will be excerpted in the Brooklyn Museum's series.

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera is 362-6000; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; and for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall, 247-7800.)

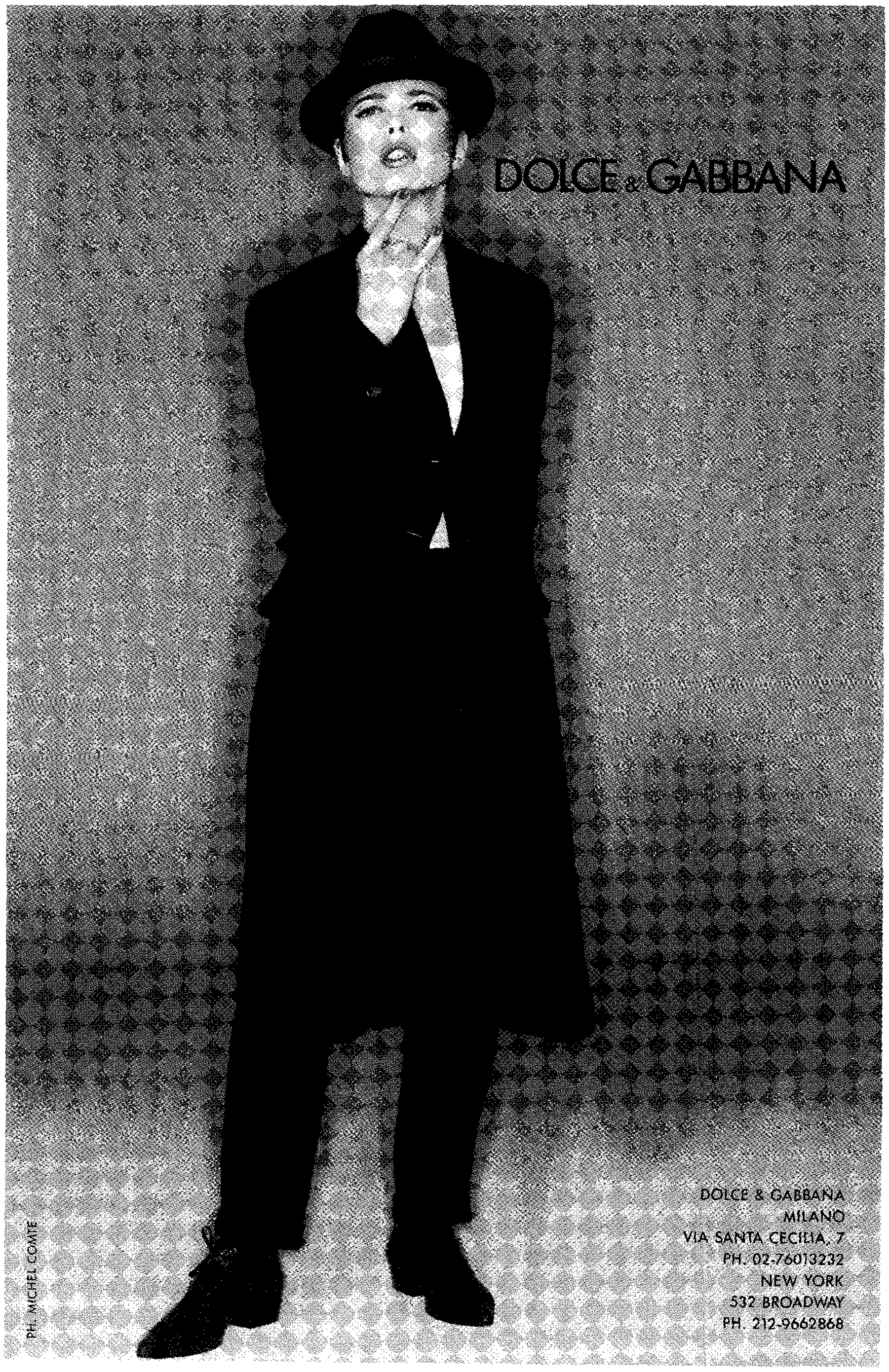
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA—CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA (with Maria Guleghina, Fabio Armiliato, and Timothy Noble) and PAGLIACCI (with Diana Soviero, Vladimir Atlantov, and Leo Nucci); Christian Badea conducts both. (Nov. 2 at 8 and Nov. 5 at 1:30.) . . . ARABELLA, with Kiri Te Kanawa, Marie McLaughlin, Natalie Dessay, Helga Dernesch, David Kuebler, Wolfgang Brendel, and Donald McIntyre; Christian Thielemann. (Nov. 3 at 8.) . . . With Julia Faulkner, Mary Mills, Heidi Grant Murphy, Ms. Dernesch, Mr. Kuebler, Hans-Joachim Ketelson, and Mr. McIntyre; Mr. Thielemann. (Nov. 7 at 8.) . . . TOSCA, with Ghena Dimitrova, Luciano Pavarotti, and Justino Díaz; James Levine. (Nov. 4 at 8.) . . . LE NOZZE DI FIGARO, with Margaret Price, Dawn Upshaw, Susanne Mentzer, Dwayne Croft, and Bryn Terfel; Mr. Levine. (Nov. 5 at 8.) . . . RIGOLETTO, with Sumi Jo, Alfredo Kraus, and Paolo Gavanelli; Mr. Badea. (Nov. 8 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA—LA BOHÈME, with Oksana Krovytska, Allison Charney, Vladimir Grishko, and Robert Perry; conducted by Christopher Keene. (Nov. 2 at 8 and Nov. 5 at 1:30.) . . . MEFISTOFELE, by Boito, with Maryanne Telese, Jeanne-Michèle Charbonnet, Daniel Hendrick, and Mark Delavan; Mr. Keene. (Nov. 3 at 8 and Nov. 6 at 1:30.) . . . THE MAGIC FLUTE, sung in English, with Susan Rosenbaum, Lorraine Ernest, Dennis McNeil, Daniel Mobbs, and Leroy Lehr; Scott Bergeson. (Nov. 4 at 8.) . . . IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA, with Nancy Allen Lundy, Richard Drews, Robert Orth, and Daniel Smith; Joseph Colaneri. (Nov. 5 at 8.) . . . WONDERFUL TOWN, by Leonard Bernstein; the opening performance of a new production, featuring Kay McClelland, Crista Moore, and Richard Muenz, with Eric Stern conducting. (Nov. 8 at 8. Through Nov. 20.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. With supertitles for non-English-language productions.)

"CARMEN" ON SCREEN—The Manhattan School of Music Orchestra, Gillian Anderson conducting, provides a live accompaniment for a screening of Cecil B. De Mille's 1915 silent film of "Carmen." (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Nov. 4 at 8. . . . NOTE: A performance of Franck's Piano Quintet will precede the screening, beginning at 7 and open to ticket holders.)

OPERA MANHATTAN—Presenting Dukas's "Ariane et Barbe-bleue," fully staged, in a reduced instrumentation by conductor Gabriel Guimarães. Sung in French, with English supertitles. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Nov. 4 at 8. For information about tickets, call 995-0995. The performance will be repeated on Nov. 9.)



CLASSICAL MUSIC–Cont'd

American Chamber Opera Company—Staging the premières of Robert Cantrick's "Three Mimes" and Lee Hoiby's "This Is the Rill Speaking." (Murphy Amphitheatre, Fashion Institute of Technology, Seventh Ave. at 27th St. Nov. 4-5 at 8. For information about tickets, call 781-0857. Through Nov. 12.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Charles Dutoit conducts Prokofiev's "Love for Three Oranges" Suite; Chausson's "Poème" and Ravel's "Tzigane" (both featuring violinist Glenn Dicterow); and Respighi's "The Fountains of Rome" and "The Pines of Rome." (Avery Fisher Hall. Nov. 3-5 at 8 and Nov. 8 at 7:30.)

New York Pops—Skitch Henderson leads a mostly Gershwin evening that features pianist Peter Nero. (Carnegie Hall. Nov 4 at 8.)

Juilliard Symphony—David Loebel conducts William Schuman's "Credendum," Giovanni Bottesini's Double Bass Concerto No. 2 (featuring Rachel Calin), and Sibelius's Symphony No. 2. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 4 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

Schumann Redux—The Bard Music Festival's summer Schumann exposition reaches its in-town recapitulation. Nov. 5 at 3: Schumann's "Davidsbündlertänze" (with pianist Sarah Rothenberg), plus songs and chamber music by Carl Loewe, Georges Onslow, and Chopin. . . . At 8: Leon Botstein conducts the American Symphony Orchestra in Spohr's Symphony No. 7, Clara Schumann's Piano Concerto (with Ian Hobson), Schumann's completion of Norbert Burgmüller's unfinished Symphony No. 2, and Schumann's own Symphony No. 4 (in its rarely played original version). . . . ¶ Nov. 6 at 3: Late works by Schumann, written when he was on the brink of insanity: his G-Minor Trio, "Mary Stuart Songs," "Variations on an Original Theme (Op. post.), and transcription for cello and piano of Bach's Third Cello Suite. . . . At 7: Mr. Botstein conducts the American Symphony Orchestra in Schumann's "Scenes from Goethe's 'Faust, Part II' "; with soprano Christine Brewer, tenor David Gordon, baritone William Sharp, bass-baritone Andrew Wentzel, the American Boychoir, and the William Appling Singers. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Lectures or panel discussions precede each concert.)

"Concert of Remembrance"—The annual Holocaust-memorial assembly includes performances of Richard Nanes' "Holocaust Symphony," Michelle Ekizian's Symphony No. 1, and the finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. Nov. 5 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

LISTENING BOOTH

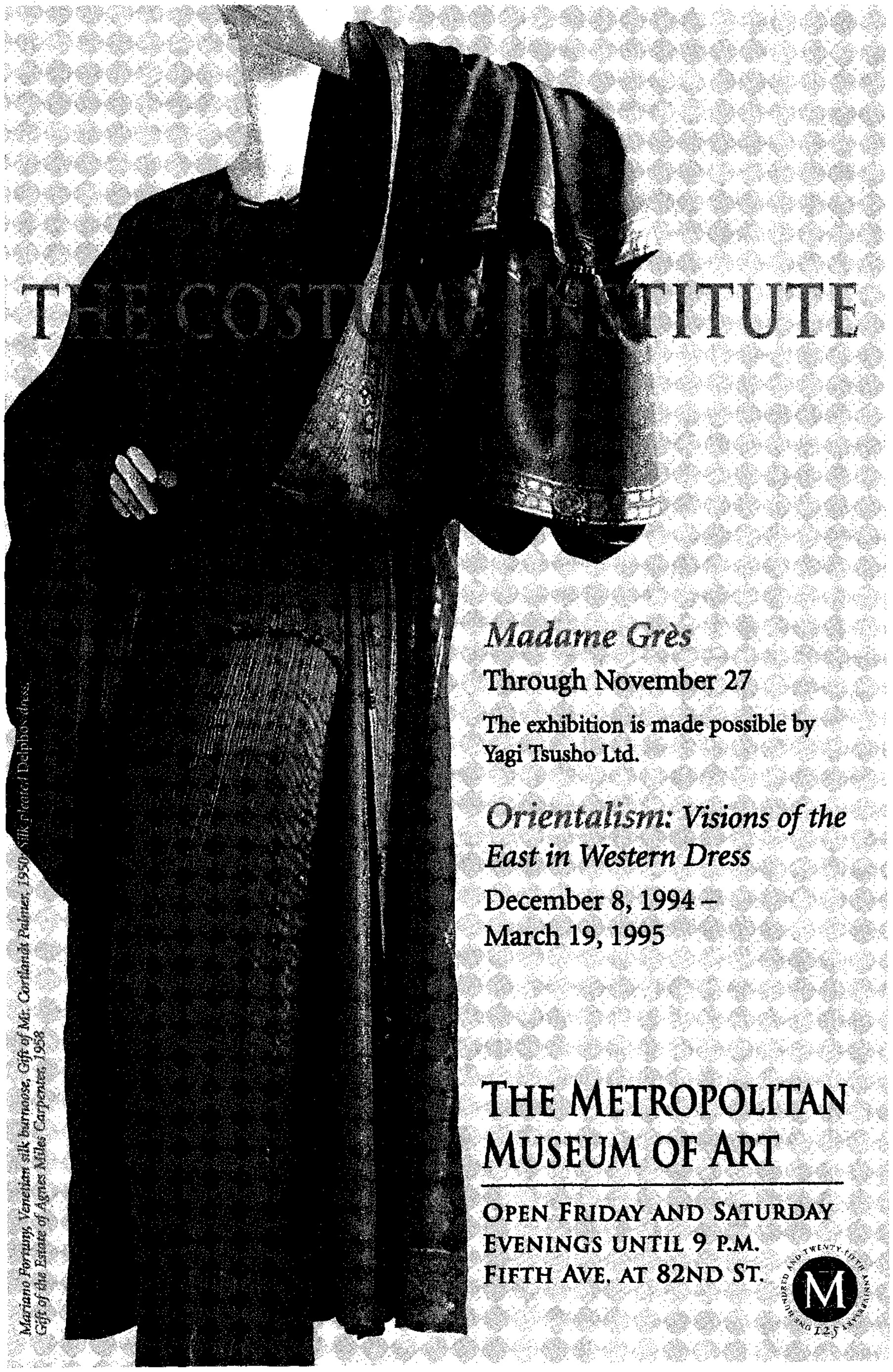
Amadeo Vives, "Bohemios," with soprano María Bayo and tenor Luis Lima; Antoni Ros Marbà conducting (Audivis Valois). Talk about popular! This one-act zarzuela received eighteen thousand performances in the twenty-five years following its première, in 1904. Like Puccini's roughly coeval "La Bohème" (*currently in repertory at New York City Opera*), its plot comes from Murger's picaresque novel "Scènes de la Vie de Bohème"; but, using different episodes, "Bohemios" captures a happier tale unfolding in the cafés and garrets of Paris. The boisterous skirt-swirling that puts some operagoers off zarzuela is absent from this work, which is closer to mainstream operetta. The "Bohemios" package includes a bonus disk of excerpts from Vives's full-length masterpiece, "Doña Francisquita" (recently released in its entirety on the same label—with Ms. Bayo and Alfredo Kraus—and expected this winter in a rival version from Sony, with Plácido Domingo), offering a further glimpse at a fascinating genre largely ignored outside the Spanish-speaking world. Both Valois recordings make their case with winning casts, spirited interpretations, and high production values.

Choirs of St. Luke in-the-Fields—David Shuler directs Schütz's "Musicalische Exequien" (a German Requiem, here performed as a memorial to those who have died from AIDS). Also on the program are works by Buxtehude, Bach, and Gerald Near. (St. Luke in-the-Fields, 487 Hudson St., at Grove St. Nov. 6 at 4. No tickets necessary.)

Canterbury Choral Society—Charles Dodsley Walker directs Mozart's "Vesperae Solennes de Confessore" and Beethoven's C-Major Mass; with soprano Andrea Matthews, mezzo-soprano Mary Phillips, tenor Jon Garrison, and bass Philip Cutlip. (Church of the Heavenly Rest, Fifth Ave. at 90th St. Nov. 6 at 4. Admission by contribution.)

Fauré's Requiem—You can catch it twice on Nov. 6 if you're so inclined, with the shortest imaginable stroll in between. Both performances use an orchestra; different brief works round out the two programs. At 4: John Weaver directing the St. Andrew Chorale and Orchestra. (Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, Madison Ave. at 73rd St. Admission by contribution.) . . . ¶ At 6: Alan Murchie directing the Chancel Choir of St. James' Episcopal Church. (Madison Ave. at 71st St. Admission by contribution.)

Musica Viva—Walter Klauss directs Britten's "St. Nicolas Cantata," with tenor soloist Rodne Brown, and with the chorus augmented by a bevy of young singers from the Allen-Stevenson Middle School and the Nightingale-Bamford School. Schubert's G-Major Mass completes the program. (All Souls Unitarian Church, Lexington Ave. at 80th St. Nov. 6 at 7. For information about tickets, call 794-3646.)



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RECITALS

Lunchtime Options—Free concerts (contributions usually welcome) of an hour or less, to enrich music lovers' midday intake. Nov. 2 at 12:30: Violinist Pierre d'Archambeau plays Respighi's Violin Concerto, with pianist Martha Umstead assisting. (Federal Hall, 26 Wall St. . . . **note:** The concert will be repeated Nov. 3 at 1, at the Green Auditorium, 40 W. 68th St., and Nov. 5 at 2, at the Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace, 28 E. 20th St.) . . . ¶ Nov. 3 at noon: Classical guitarist Ignacio Rodes plays music by Dowland, Bach, Rodrigo, and others. (St. Paul's Chapel, Broadway at Fulton St.) . . . ¶ Nov. 7 at noon: Owen Burdick directs the Choir of Trinity Church in works by Randall Giles, Edward Thompson, and Stravinsky, as well as in his own works. (St. Paul's Chapel, Broadway at Fulton St.) . . . ¶ Nov. 8 at 12:30: Pianist Stella Simakova performs Schumann's "Carnaval," Brahms' Three Intermezzi (Op. 117), and Scriabin's Sonata No. 4. (Continental Insurance Atrium, 180 Maiden Lane.) . . . ¶ Nov. 8 at 12:30: Gail Archer plays on a notable Fisk organ. (Church of the Transfiguration, Fifth Ave. at 29th St.)

Alicia de Larrocha—The pianist performs two sonatas by Antonio Soler, six dances from Granados's "Danzas Españolas," and Schumann's "Carnaval." (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 2 at 8.)

Borodin String Quartet—The foursome continues its season-long survey of Shostakovich's string quartets by playing his fourth, fifth, and sixth. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Nov. 2 at 8.)

Robert Bush—Flutist, performing sonatas by Hummel and Gabriel Pierné, as well as works by Frank Martin, Astor Piazzolla, Joan Tower, and Sofia Gubaidulina; with pianist Susan Walters and classical guitarist Nicholas Goluses. (Weill Recital Hall. Nov. 2 at 8.)

Bargemusic—Pianist Anne-Marie McDermott and cellist Ronald Thomas perform Mendelssohn's D-Major Cello Sonata; violinist Ida Levin joins them for trios by Debussy and Mendelssohn (in C Minor). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Nov. 3 at 6 and Nov. 6 at 4; the Thursday performance is a candlelit dinner-concert.)

Composers String Quartet—The ensemble, which is currently celebrating its thirtieth season at the high end of the cutting edge, performs an all-American program: Ives' Quartet No. 1 and Scherzo, Babbitt's Quartet No. 5, Cage's Quartet, and Sessions' Quartet No. 2. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Nov. 3 at 8.)

American String Quartet—Performing Beethoven's Quartets in G Major (Op. 18, No. 2) and E-Flat Major (Op. 74), as well his Septet (with colleagues assisting). (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Nov. 3 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Amadeus Trio—Performing piano trios by Haydn, Arensky, and Brahms (his Second). (Weill Recital Hall. Nov. 4 at 8.)

Composers Concordance—The modern-music ensemble plays chamber works by Ginastera, Mary Inwood, M. William Karlins, Bruce Saylor, Edward Smaldone, and Joan Tower. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. Nov. 4 at 8. For information about tickets, call 564-4899.)

Sonic Boom Festival—The third annual festival, a collaborative venture by five of New York's leading contemporary-music ensembles, will unroll through the course of six concerts at three-day intervals. Nov. 4 at 8: Four of the festival's participating organizations—Continuum, the Da Capo Chamber Players, the New York New Music Ensemble, and Newband—take turns in a free program that features works by Carter, Nancarrow, Dean Drummond, David Felder, Jennifer Higdon, and Francis Schwartz. . . .

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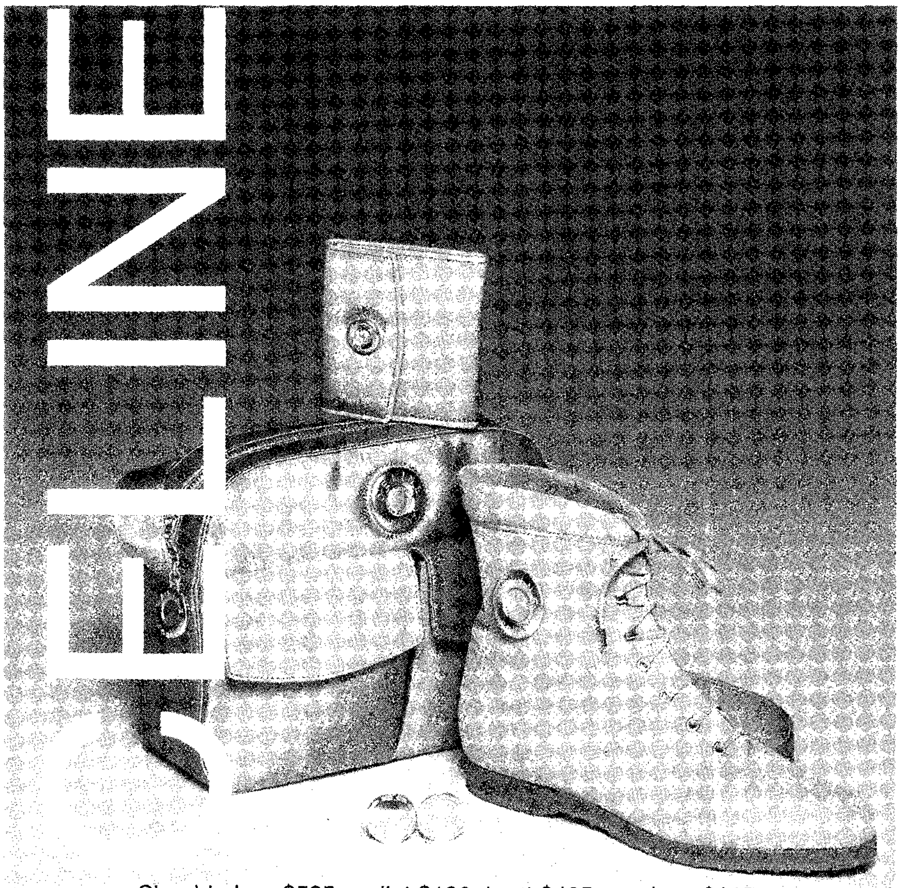

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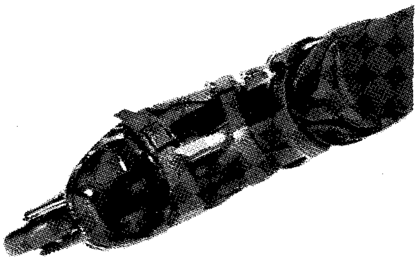

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CLASSICAL MUSIC–Cont'd

¶ Nov. 7 at 8: The Da Capo Chamber Players perform works based on Russian and Eastern European genres, by Paul Schoenfield (his klezmer-inspired Trio), Gunther Schuller, Bruce Adolphe, Deborah Drattell, and Aaron Kernis. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799.)

STATEN ISLAND ELECTRONIC MUSIC FESTIVAL—A celebration of technomusic, ranging from purely electronic compositions to works that include the participation of live musicians; including works by David Behrman, Tom Hamilton, and Dan Farkas. (Newhouse Gallery, Snug Harbor Cultural Center, 1000 Richmond Terrace, Staten Island. 1-718 448-2500. Nov. 5, from 6 to 10.)

YOUNG UCK KIM AND STAFFAN SCHEJA—The violinist and the pianist will perform Ravel's "Habanera" and Violin Sonata and Stravinsky's "Suite Italienne." Their recital concludes with a performance of Stravinsky's "Duo Concertant," for which New York City Ballet principal dancers Darci Kistler and Nikolaj Hübbe will be on hand to dance George Balanchine's choreography for the work. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Nov. 5 at 8.)

ARTEK ENSEMBLE—Harpsichordist Gwendolyn Toth leads vocal soloists and her period-instrument players in a program of seventeenth-century English works, some of which are based on the Orpheus legend, including Matthew Locke's "The Mask of Orpheus" and pieces by John Blow and Purcell. (St. Michael's Church, Amsterdam Ave. at 99th St. Nov. 5 at 8. For information about tickets, call 873-0473.)

YALE MUSIC SPECTRUM—Presenting chamber music by Bartók, Britten, Janáček, and Ezra Laderman. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Nov. 5 at 8.)

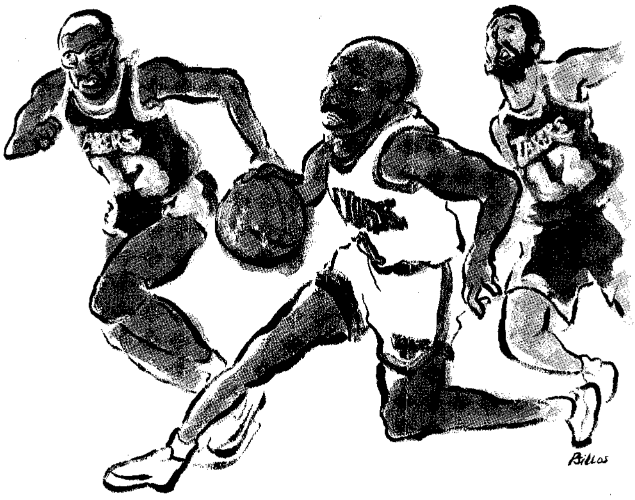
O'BRIAN CINELLI GUITAR DUO—Performing classical-guitar works by Sor, Giuliani, Diabelli, and others. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 1-718 885-2478. Nov. 6 at noon.)

FLANDERS' RECORDER QUARTET—The foursome, which has been known to employ as many as a hundred recorders of varying sizes in the course of a concert, performs Renaissance and Baroque works by Byrd, Frescobaldi, Bach, Vivaldi, and others. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Nov. 6 at 5.)

AVNER ARAD—Pianist, in an all-Schumann recital. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Nov. 6 at 6 and 8. Admission is free, but call 876-6000 to reserve a seat.)

BRADLEY BROOKSHIRE—Harpsichordist, playing selections from Book One of Bach's "Well-Tempered Clavier." (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. Nov. 6 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

ALAN FEINBERG—The pianist performs an hour-long recital of works by Chopin, Schubert, and Amy Cheney Beach. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Nov. 7 at 7.)



On November 8, Derek Harper and the Knicks vs. the Lakers, in the first home game of the season.

SPORTS

BASKETBALL

ONE BRICK SHY—The start of a season is all about questions. For the Knicks: Can John Starks and his teammates, a campaign older (and wiser?), put last June's Night of a Thousand Bad Jump Shots in Houston behind them and reach the summit again, for another shot at the N.B.A. championship? Do Ewing, Oakley, and Harper have one more huge effort left in them? Will Coach Riley loosen up the rotation and inject a little more of his fast-paced Showtime into the offense, now that he can draw on the added skills of rookies Charlie Ward and Monty Williams and newcomer Doug Christie? Across the river, the Nets' questions—and expectations—are more limited. With Chuck Daly gone, can new coach Butch Beard get inside Derrick Coleman's head and make a winner out of him? And will this be the breakthrough year for Kenny Anderson, dogged by injuries but potentially the best point guard in the league? The Knicks' season begins Nov. 4 with an out-of-town matchup against the Boston Celtics. Their Garden opener is Nov. 8, against the Lakers. The Nets open, on Nov. 4, in Houston, against the Rockets. Their first Arena game will be against the Chicago Bulls, on Nov. 9.

KNICKS—Vs. the Los Angeles Lakers, Nov. 8 at 7:30.

NETS—Away until Nov. 9, when they'll face the Chicago Bulls.

FOOTBALL

GIANTS—Away until Nov. 13, when they'll face the Arizona Cardinals.

JETS—Vs. the Buffalo Bills, on Nov. 6 at 4.

HOCKEY

NO NEWS IS BAD NEWS—As of press time, the 1994-95 National Hockey League season was still on hold and no games were scheduled.

NEW YORK CITY MARATHON

26.2 X 25—For many of the twenty-seven thousand runners in this silver-anniversary marathon, the race will be a little melancholy without the presence of Fred Lebow, the marathon's founder, who died last month. The route, though, remains the same, meandering through all five boroughs, and most runners will make the tour in about four hours. For a close look at those exquisitely developed calves, forget about Central Park and the finish line, and situate yourself along First Ave. above 59th St., at around noon. The starting cannon will be fired on Nov. 6 at 10:50 at the Verrazano Narrows Bridge. For more information, call the New York Road Runners Club, at 860-4455.

(The Knicks play at Madison Square Garden, 465-6000; the Nets at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900; and the Giants and the Jets play at Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands, 1-201 935-8111.)

FOR KIDS

(A list of activities for children and their parents or other adults.)

"IT'S ALIVE!" AND "SO, SUE ME"—The Night Kitchen, Maurice Sendak and Arthur Yorinks' children's-theatre company, makes its New York début with these two comedies. Written and directed by Mr. Yorinks, both plays are performed without dialogue but with special sound effects. The two shows run in repertory through Nov. 6. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 346-8510.)

WALT DISNEY'S WORLD ON ICE—Presenting "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." Don't worry: Mickey, Minnie, Goofy, the Little Mermaid, and crew will be there, too. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6741. Nov. 2 at 7; Nov. 3 at 10:30 A.M. and 7; Nov. 4 at 10:30 A.M.; Nov. 4 at 7, a Spanish-language performance; Nov. 5 at 11 A.M., 3, and 7; and Nov. 6 at 1 and 5.)

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"JUST KIDDING!"—Symphony Space's Saturday-morning series continues with the modern-dance troupe Donald Byrd/The Group in "The Rehearsal," which tells the story of a dance company getting ready for a big performance. (Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Nov. 5 at 11.)

AND DON'T FORGET—The Big Apple Circus at Lincoln Center, through Jan. 8 (268-0055).

ABOVE AND BEYOND

LIVING IN THE GENERATIONS—Sherman Alexie, Joy Harjo, Muriel Miguel, N. Scott Momaday, and James Welch will participate in two free literary evenings titled "Native American Voices: A Dialogue Across the Generations." Nov. 6 at 5: The writers will read from their own work and from the work of those who have influenced them. (Vanderbilt Hall, New York University, 40 Washington Square S., at Macdougal St.) . . . ¶ Nov. 7 at 6:30: A panel discussion about contemporary Native American literature. (Time-Life Auditorium, Sixth Ave. at 50th St.)

PEEL ME A MUM, PICK ME A GRAPE—The Brooklyn Botanic Garden's fall flower show, the Days of Wine and Chrysanthemums, opens Nov. 5. The Steinhardt Conservatory will be replete with mums and grapes, and a display will detail grapevine training for viticulture. (1000 Washington Ave., near Grand Army Plaza. Open daily, except Mondays, from 10 to 4. No tickets necessary. Through Nov. 27.)

RED-LETTER DAY—The American Stamp Dealers Association is offering exhibits, lectures, beginner albums, and free stamp appraisals, among other philatelic delights, at their "mega-event." (Madison Square Garden. Nov. 3, from noon to 8; Nov. 4-5, from 10 to 6; and Nov. 6, from 10 to 4. No tickets necessary.)

FROM SOUTH OF THE BORDER—At Grand Central Terminal, there will be Mexican crafts and art work, some of which will be for sale, as well as several altars, in an exhibit titled "Viva la Muerte." (Main Waiting Room. Mondays through Fridays, 10 to 7, and Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5. Through Nov. 22. No tickets necessary.)

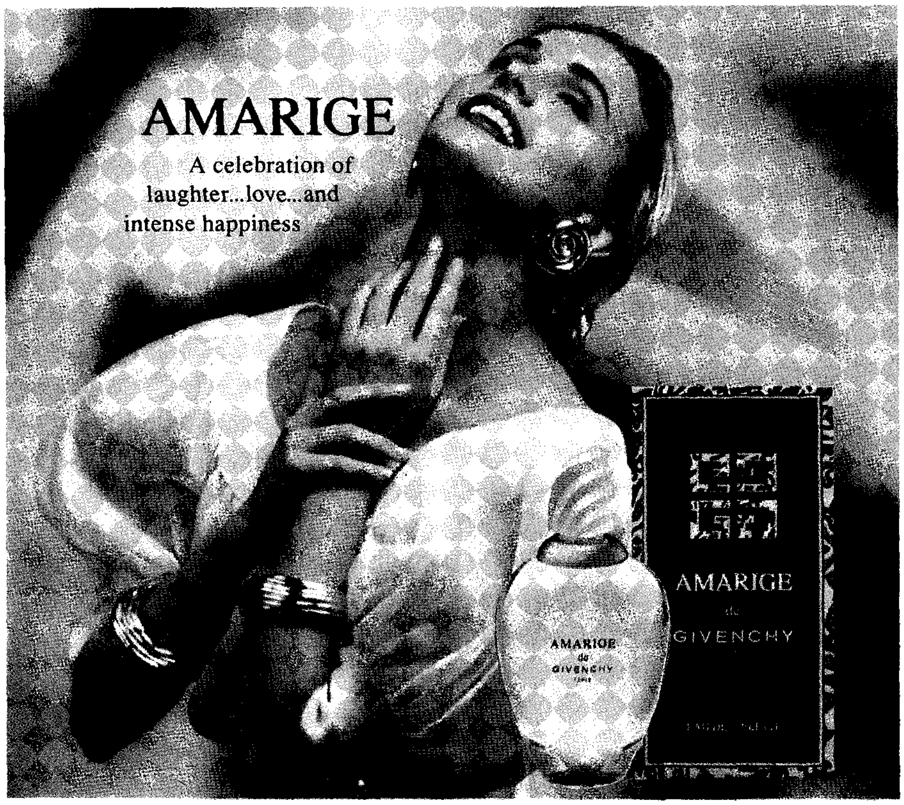
S.O.S.—On Nov. 2 at 7, two benefit readings will be held for Share Our Strength, a national hunger-relief organization. Amy Bloom and Don DeLillo will read from their own work. (Limbo, 47 Avenue A, at 4th St. 477-5271.) . . . ¶ Marilyn Hacker, Paul Muldoon, and Gloria Naylor will read from their own work. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. For more information, call 254-9628.)

READINGS—Nov. 2 at 7: Susan Sontag will read parts of two of her essays, "Illness as Metaphor" and "AIDS and Its Metaphors." (New York Academy of Medicine, Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. 876-8200, ext. 272.) . . . ¶ Nov. 2 at 8: Annie Dillard will read from a selection of her own prose. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799.) . . . ¶ Nov. 5 at 7:30: Joan Nestle, who is being honored by the Astraea National Lesbian Action Foundation, and Jill Johnston will read from their own work, in an evening that will also include music by Lavender Light and Connie Lofton. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. For information about tickets, call 529-8021.) . . . ¶ Nov. 7 at 8: Nadine Gordimer will read from her new novel, "None to Accompany Me." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

TALKS—Nov. 3 at 8: Robert Ryman and Yve-Alain Bois will present two views of Mondrian. (School of Visual Arts Amphitheatre, 209 E. 23rd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Nov. 8 at 6:30: Rem Koolhaas will talk about his book "Delirious New York," and about his current exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art. (Urban Center Books, 457 Madison Ave., at 50th St. 935-3595.)

WALKS & TOURS—Nov. 5-6, from 1 to 5: The observation deck of the arch at Brooklyn's Grand Army Plaza will reopen with a new mural created by local schoolchildren. For more information, call 1-718 965-8999. . . . ¶ Nov. 6 at 1: Radical Walking Tours will prowl the Lower East Side, for signs of dissent. For more information, call 1-718 492-0069.

MEMORANDUM—Nov. 8, from 6 A.M. to 9 P.M.: The polls are open for your voting pleasure. The big race, of course, is for governor of the Empire State.



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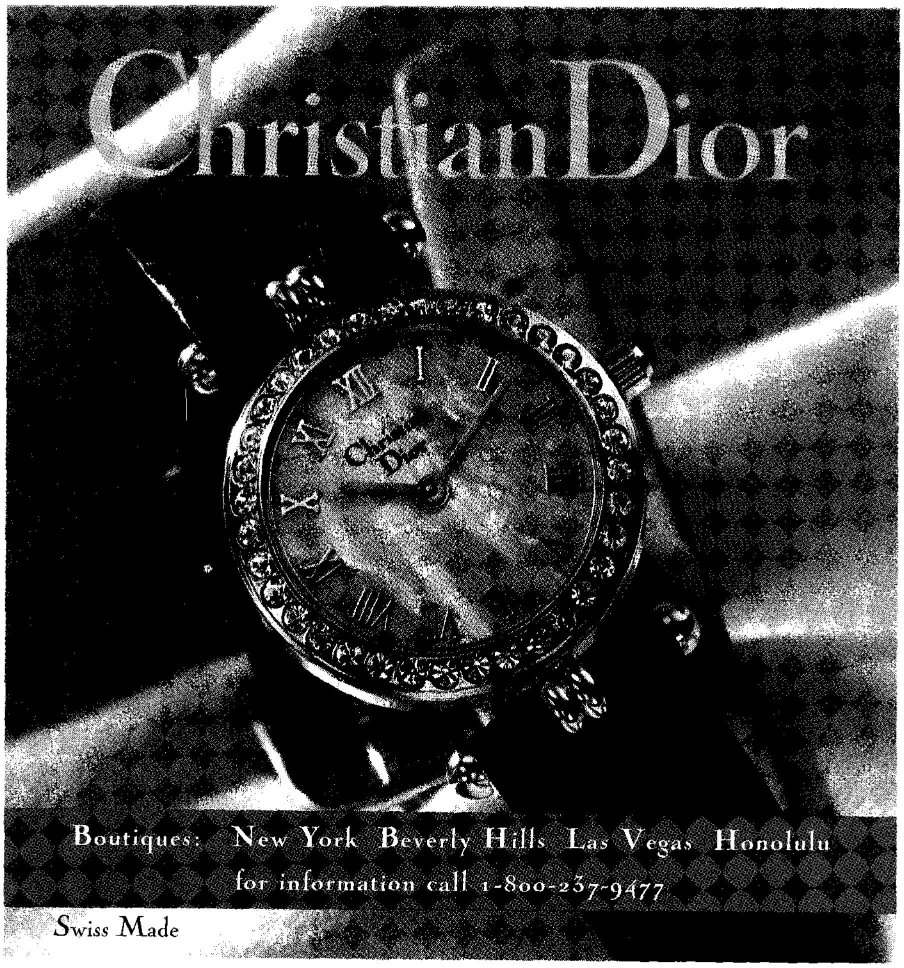
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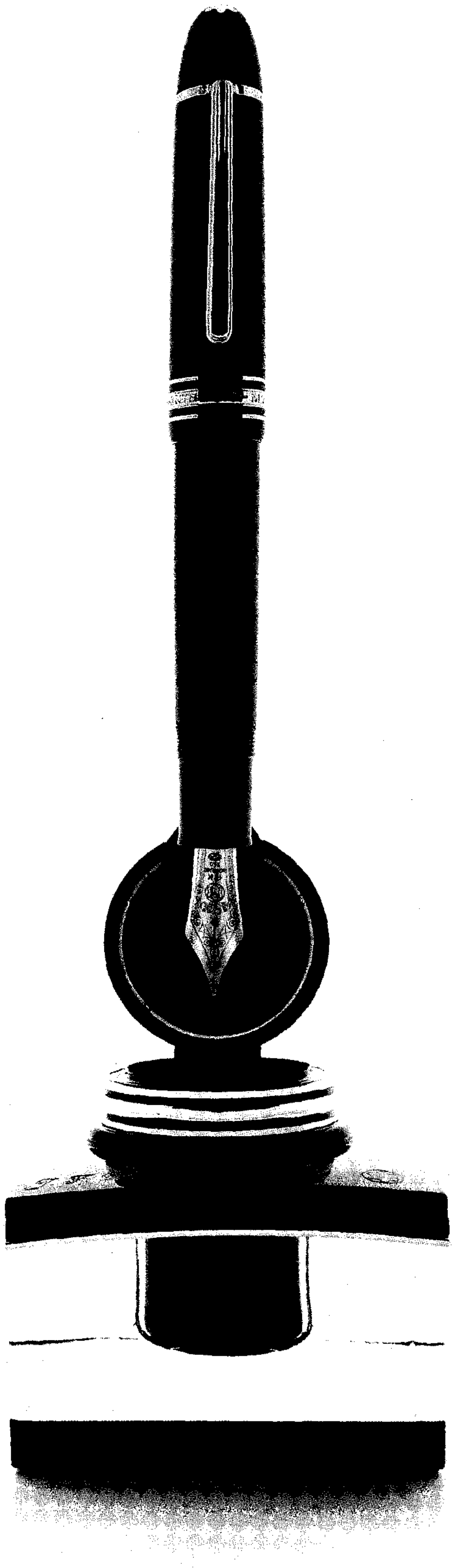

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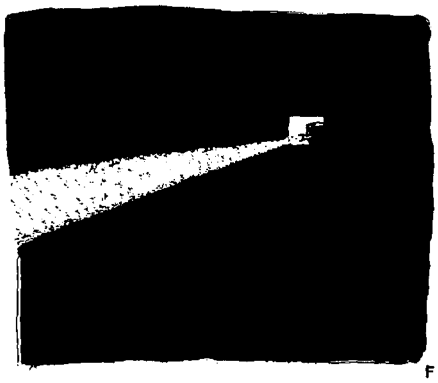


THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

Double Dragon—A mystical martial-arts adventure set in post-apocalyptic Southern California, where a terrible earthquake has left anarchy and devastation in its wake. Robert Patrick ("Terminator 2") is a sinister gang leader battling with the forces of good (represented by Julia Nickson, Scott Walsh, Mark Decascos, and Alyssa Milano). Written by Michael Davis, Peter Gould, and Mark Brazill. Directed by Jim Yukich. Opening November 4. (New York Twin, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

Floundering—James LeGros is unemployed, his brother is a drug addict, and his girlfriend is cheating on him in a black comedy about being down and out in Venice, California. With John Cusack, Ethan Hawke, Lisa Zane, and Steve Buscemi. Written and directed by Peter McCarthy. Opening November 4. (Quad Cinema.)

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein—Kenneth Branagh directed and stars as Dr. Frankenstein, with Robert De Niro as the creature. Also with Helena Bonham Carter, Tom Hulce, Aidan Quinn, John Cleese, and Ian Holm. The screenplay is by Steph Lady and Frank Darabont. Opening November 4. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Oleanna—David Mamet directed this adaptation of his 1992 play about a college professor who is accused of sexual harassment by a student. With William H. Macy and Debra Eisenstadt. Opening November 4. (Village Theatre VII and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The War—In a small town in Mississippi during the early seventies, a young brother and sister (Elijah Wood and Lexi Randall) build a tree-house refuge and defend it against the other kids in the neighborhood. Kevin Costner is their father, who has recently returned from Vietnam, and Mare Winningham is their mother. Written by Kathy McWorter and directed by Jon Avnet. Opening November 4. (Coronet, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and National Twin.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Anthony Lane, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre addresses and phone numbers are listed on page 65.)

The Browning Version—Albert Finney plays Andrew Crocker-Harris, a rigid, thoroughly unpopular classics master at an English public school. The role appears to be better suited to a performer from the rueful-and-repressed school of understated British acting, but Finney's restraint here is peculiarly exhilarating. It's a great performance, and, coming from an actor whose usual style is exuberant and expansive, a wholly unexpected one. The movie is the second screen adaptation of a 1948 Terence Rattigan play; the screenplay, by Ronald Harwood, closely follows Rattigan's script for the earlier film, which came out in 1951. The structure is that of a well-made play, but as outdated as the piece may seem, the new movie is strong and affecting. Mike Figgis's direction is swift, sharp, and emotionally exact, and he gets terrific performances from the entire cast, which includes Greta Scacchi, Michael Gambon, Ben Silverstone, Matthew Modine, and Julian Sands.—T.R. (10/31/94) (Paris.)

Bullets Over Broadway—A nicely structured piece of silliness from Woody Allen, set in the theatre world of the nineteen-twenties. John Cusack is the Woody substitute, an earnest young playwright who needs to discover an existence beyond the stage; Chazz Palminteri steals the picture as the taciturn gangster who swaps places with him, becoming as ruthless in his aesthetics as he is with a gun. Around this neat switch Allen assembles a crowd of near-caricatures—opportunities for Dianne Wiest, Jim Broadbent, Jennifer Tilly, and others to show their stuff. The film offers a rematch of Art vs. Life, the old encounter that Allen set up in "The Purple Rose of Cairo" and at the finale of "Manhattan Murder Mystery"; this version has the same pleasurable swiftness.—A.L. (10/24/94) (Cinema I and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Caro Diario—A three-part comic diary by the Italian writer-director-star Nanni Moretti. The first two sections ("On My Vespa") and ("Islands") are trifling. Only the third entry ("Doctors") gets some real black humor going, with an account of dermatological misdiagnosis that will give nightmares to anyone the least bit itchy. In Italian.—M.S. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

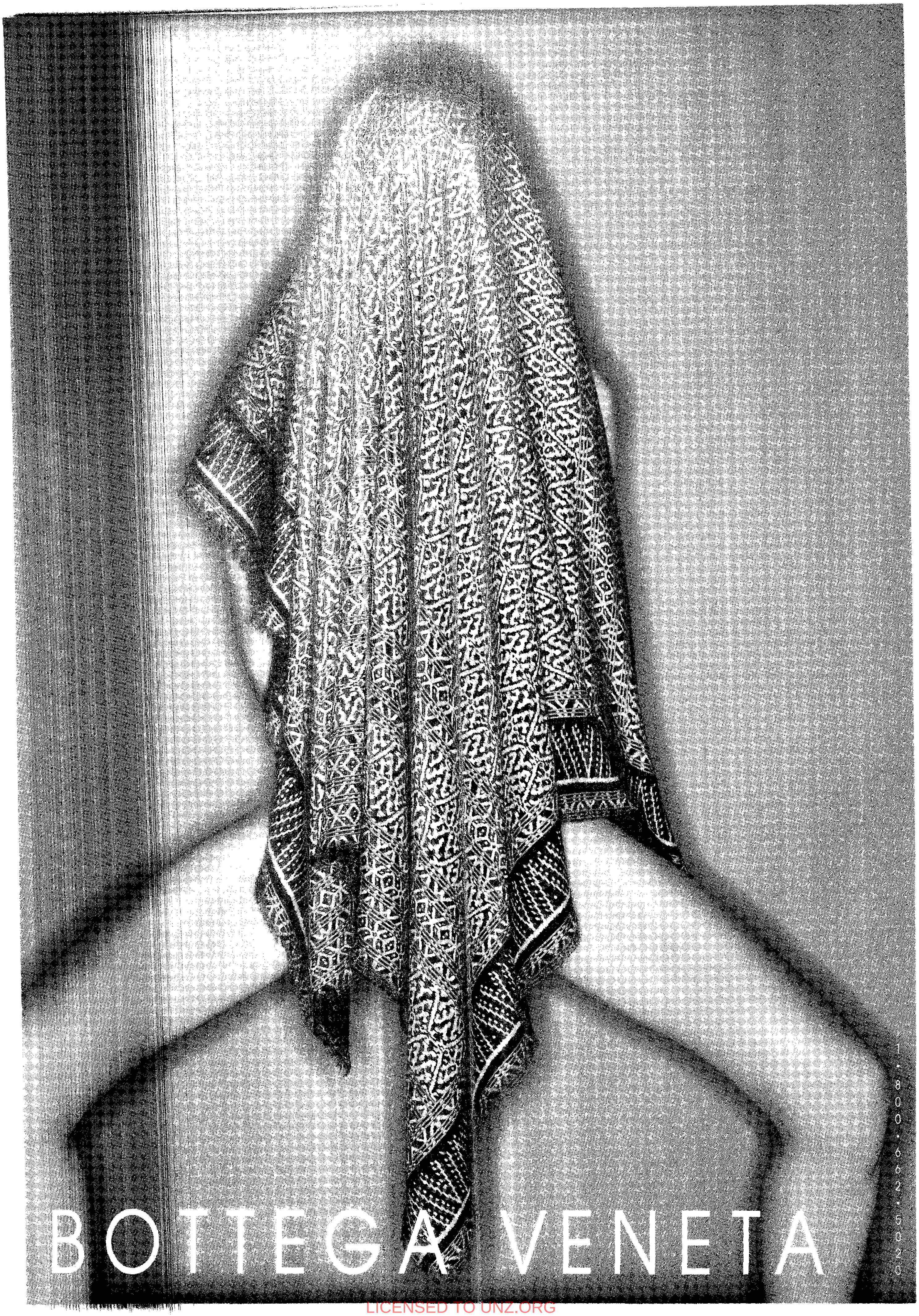
Clerks—The first feature by twenty-three-year-old writer-director Kevin Smith chronicles a day in the life of an Asbury Park, New Jersey, convenience-store clerk. (Angelika Film Center.)

D.R.O.P. Squad—Spike Lee is the executive producer of David Johnson's comedy-drama about a black advertising executive whose sister is so disgusted by his campaigns for malt liquor and fried chicken that she arranges to have him kidnapped by the Deprogramming and Restoration of Pride (D.R.O.P.) squad. (19th Street East 6, New York Twin, and Astor Plaza.)

Ed Wood—Tim Burton's biography of the filmmaker who inflicted "Plan 9 from Outer Space" and "Glen or Glenda" on fifties moviegoers tries to persuade us that its hero is a sort of holy fool of cinema. The picture is superbly shot, in black-and-white, by Stefan Czapsky, and most of the actors—Bill Murray, Sarah Jessica Parker, Jeffrey Jones, and Martin Landau (as Bela Lugosi)—are engaging. But there's a strong whiff of pointlessness to the whole enterprise. Wood (played by Johnny Depp) is depicted as a wide-eyed, boyish innocent, and he simply isn't interesting enough to hold our full attention for two hours.—T.R. (10/3/94) (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Sutton.)

L'Enfer—In Claude Chabrol's psychological thriller Paul and Nelly (François Cluzet and Emmanuelle Béart) are a happily married couple whose relationship deteriorates when Paul hears voices accusing his wife of infidelity. In French. (Village East Cinemas and Cinema 3rd Avenue.)

Exit to Eden—Garry Marshall inserts two desperately unfunny slapstick cops (Rosie O'Donnell and Dan Aykroyd) into Anne Rice's florid ode to the bondage she thinks shall set us free. The only way the director could have made this tale of an S & M island paradise any flimsier, clumsier, or more banal would have been to cast Regis and Kathie Lee as the cops and set it on a Carnival cruise. Dana Delany plays the island's boss dominatrix as an idealistic spokesperson for female empowerment, while Paul Mercurio, her love slave, flails at both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CURRENT FILMS—Cont'd

romance and comedy: in one scene, he even apes Jim Carrey's imitation of Nadia Comaneci. Deborah Amelon and Bob Brunner adapted Rice's novel.—M.S. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

Faust—A full-length feature from the Czech animation director Jan Švankmajer, his first since "Alice," in 1987. A tired Czech citizen is handed a map on the streets of Prague; it leads him to a shabby courtyard, a puppet theatre, and a bruising encounter with the powers of evil. He raises the Devil, only to be confronted by a replica of his own face: a typically bleak hint from Švankmajer that we invent our own temptations—that any of us would make a good Faust. The best introduction to Švankmajer remains his short films; "Faust" is less shocking, more narcotic. Still, with its blend of live action, chattering marionettes, and weird, fleshy stop-motion sequences—not to mention the pitch-black humor—it throws you off balance more thoroughly than any other movie in town.—A.L. (Film Forum.)

Hoop Dreams—This engrossing documentary tells the stories of two inner-city Chicago teen-agers, William Gates and Arthur Agee, who aspire to careers in professional basketball. The filmmakers—Steve James, Frederick Marx, and Peter Gilbert—follow them all the way through high school. In the course of the movie's patient, sympathetic narrative (the running time is close to three hours), our reaction to the heroes' progress changes decisively, and for the better: at first we're assessing their chances, measuring them for N.B.A. uniforms; by the end we're rooting for them simply to survive the process without losing all their exuberance and drive and creative spirit.—T.R. (10/17/94) (Orpheum VII, Film Forum, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

I Don't Want to Talk About It—Luisina Brando plays a rich widow in a Latin-American village who refuses to acknowledge the vertically challenged condition of her dwarf daughter (Alejandra Podesta); Marcello Mastroianni is the dashing new man in town who improbably falls for and marries the girl. The erotic whimsy and small-town humor don't congeal, and the deus-ex-circus ending is an insult. It's a one-joke movie with a lousy punch line. Maria Luisa Bemberg directed. In Spanish.—M.S. (68th St. Playhouse and Quad Cinema.)

I Like It Like That—It's macha versus macho in the Bronx, as a young mother of three (Lauren Vélez) takes an assistant's job at a record company to bail her husband (Jon Seda) out of jail, only to rouse gossip and jealousy in the barrio. Darnell Martin's enjoyably brash début movie has originality and feeling beneath the look-at-me theatrics. It's about the comedy and pathos of people taking on more responsibility than they can handle; the best moments come when the characters (and Martin) catch their breath and crack some jokes. There's riotous sexual vaudeville provided by Vélez and Seda, and by Jesse Borrego as Vélez's transvestite brother and Lisa Vidal as her rival. Griffin Dunne, as Vélez's boss, does the funniest variation yet on his trademark role—the emotionally strung-out white man.—M.S. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Manhattan Twin, Orpheum VII, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

Imaginary Crimes—Set in the fifties and sixties, it's a girl's answer to the recent string of con-man and son movies, with Harvey Keitel as a bogus Portland mine speculator and Fairuza Balk and Elisabeth Moss as his daughters. Keitel is welcomely restrained, and Balk has emotional "stuff" the way an untrained athlete has physical "stuff." Kelly Lynch, who appears briefly as Balk's mother, gives the subtlest performance—a daringly stylized portrayal of disappointment. But Anthony Drazan's direction traps them under waxy buildup. From Sheila Ballantyne's novel.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas and First & 62nd Cinemas.)

Jason's Lyric—In Doug McHenry's ersatz poetic tale of romance and death in Houston's inner city, Jason (Allen Payne) is the hero and Lyric is the name of his lover (Jada Pinkett). Jason and Lyric both have family problems. Jason's dad, Maddog (Forest Whitaker), seen in flashback, was a volatile Vietnam vet. His alcoholic brother, Joshua (Bokeem Woodbine), joins some aspiring bank robbers—who happen to be led by Alonzo (Treach), Lyric's brother. The held-back revelation of who killed Maddog makes for the worst kind of trick Freudian melodrama. Screenplay by Bobby Smith, Jr.—M.S. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 19th Street East 6, Manhattan Twin, and Orpheum VII.)

The Last Seduction—A star turn from Linda Fiorentino as Bridget, a woman with a frozen wasteland where her moral landscape should be. In New York, she cheats her husband (Bill Pullman) out of their illegal earnings; upstate, she cheats Mike (Peter Berg) out of everything but his life. The movie has a hard forties snap to it—lust is a weapon and love is a letdown. In this follow-up to "Red Rock West," director John Dahl proves that he is never happier than when roaming the back streets of film noir.—A.L. (10/24/94) (Village Theatre VII.)

Love Affair—Glenn Gordon Caron's movie is the second remake of Leo McCarey's 1939 romantic weeper (same title), which starred Charles Boyer and Irene Dunne; in 1957, McCarey filmed it again, as "An Affair to Remember," with Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr. In the latest version, Warren Beatty and Annette Bening do their best to simulate the charismatic swooning and mooning of their predecessors, but they don't bring a lot of conviction to their roles. No reason, really, why they should: this was cheesy, contrived material in 1939 and in 1957, and it still is. Everyone involved in this picture seems overqualified, from the writers (Robert Towne, with Beatty) to the cinematographer (Conrad Hall) to the production designer (the late Ferdinando Scarfiotti) to the large, pointlessly high-powered supporting cast (headed by Katharine Hepburn). There's an air of slumming about the whole enterprise, which kind of undercuts the romantic mood. The earth does not move. Also with Garry Shandling, Kate Capshaw, Pierce Brosnan, Chloe Webb, and Harold Ramis.—T.R. (Village Theatre VII, Tower East, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

Minbo—or, The Gentle Art of Japanese Extortion—Juzo Itami's broad comedy-melodrama exposes yakuza pressure tactics as mere bluster. The gangsters want to make money, not mayhem; they rely on furious gestures and verbal intimidation. The movie is over the top and overlong, but Itami introduces hilarious sex-role comedy by casting his wife, Nobuko Miyamoto, as a canny lawyer who teaches a two-man hotel task force (Yasuo Daichi and Takehiro Murata) how to stand up to hoodlums. The yakuza are rowdy caricatures of men's men; this efficient lady drives them nuts. In Japanese.—M.S. (Cinema Village.)

Only You—Moonbeams don't strike twice for Norman Jewison. The director pulls together elements from "Roman Holiday," "Summertime," and "Cinderella," as well as his own "Moonstruck," and comes up with a negligible comedy about a jittery bride-to-be (Marisa Tomei) who jets from Pittsburgh to Italy in search of the true love prophesied by a Ouija board and a fortune-teller. Robert Downey, Jr., plays the American in Rome who may be her one and only. Diane Drake's script doesn't provide the memorable romantic interplay that would help an audience share Tomei's fantasy. The supporting cast (Bonnie Hunt, Fisher Stevens, and Joaquim De Almeida) fares better, as does cinematographer Sven Nykvist, who gets to

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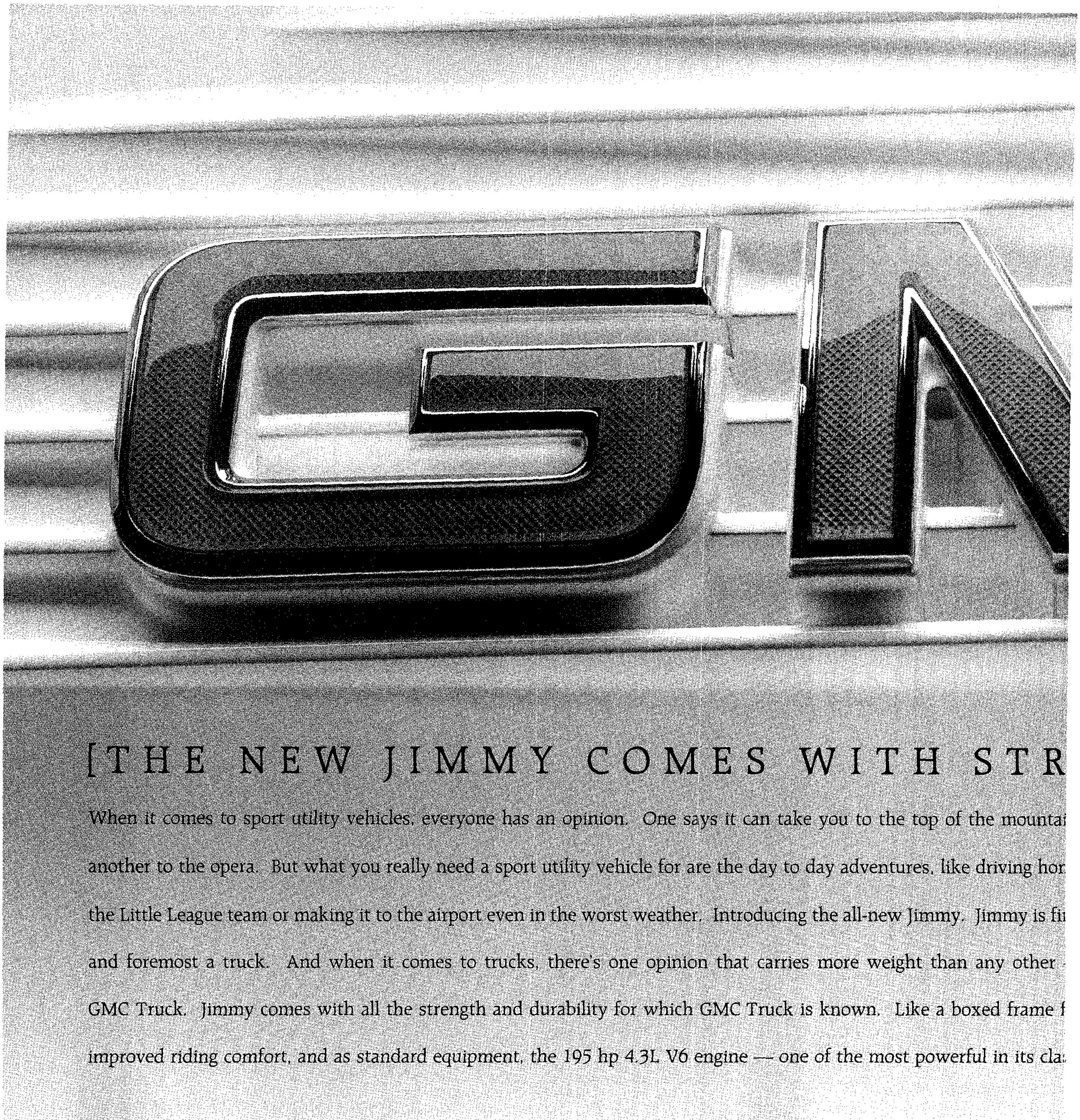

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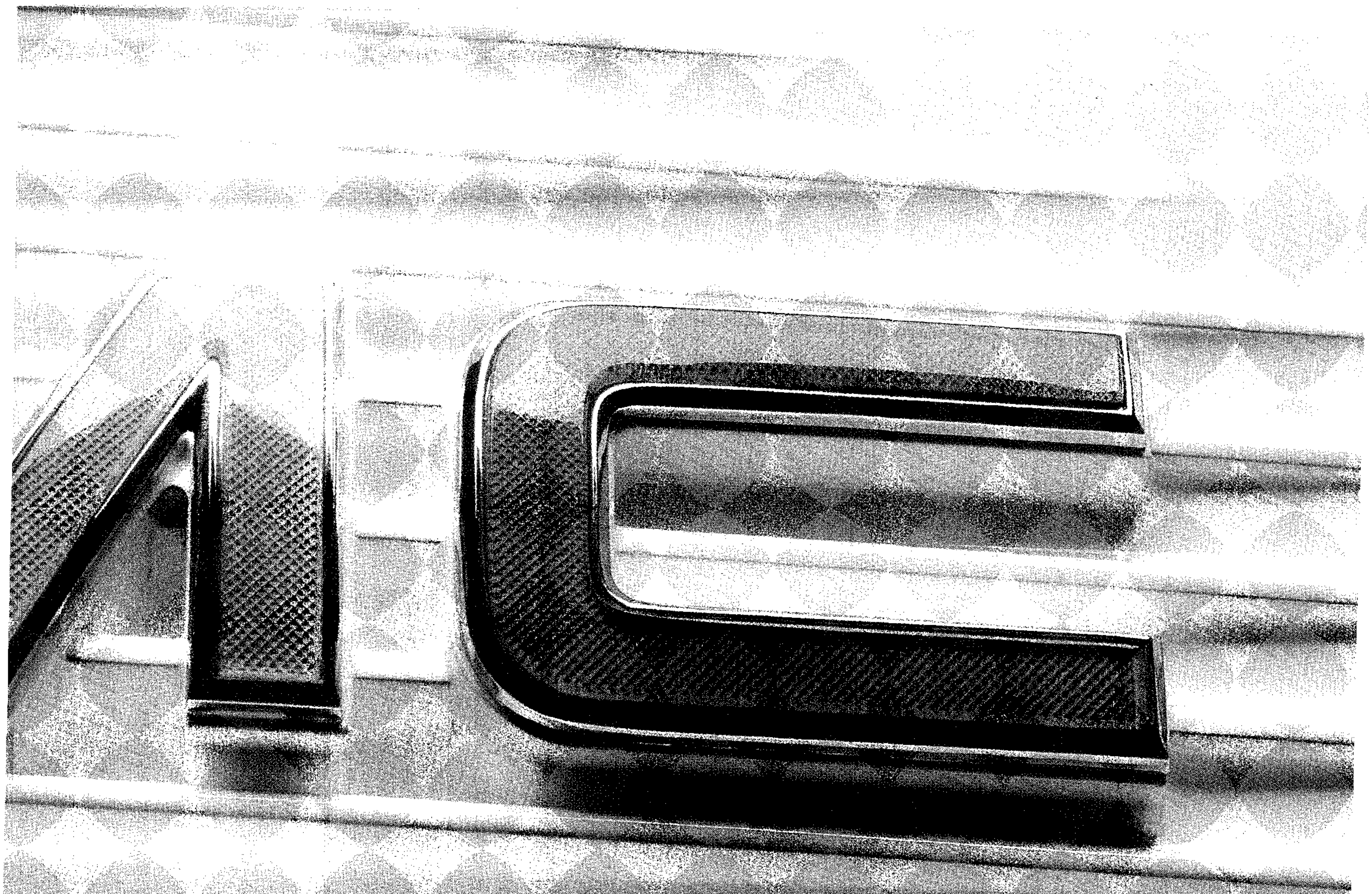

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shoot Venice, Rome, and Positano.—M.S. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

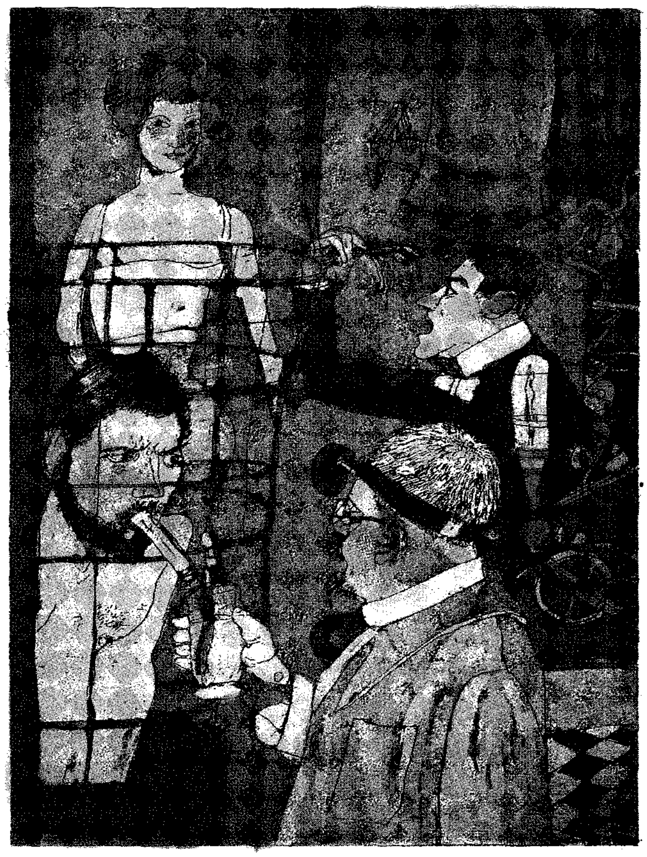
Pulp Fiction—In Quentin Tarantino's new picture, John Travolta, Samuel L. Jackson, Uma Thurman, Tim Roth, Harvey Keitel, Christopher Walken, and Bruce Willis parade through two and a half hours of complicated, crossweaving Los Angeles plots, some of which are more gripping than others; the talk is dirty and funny, the violence always waiting just around the corner. It's a bright and startling picture, but the next day it seems like a dream: the film attacks your senses and gives you almost nothing to remember it by, let alone to nourish you. It had to happen, and Tarantino is the man to deliver it: cinema as fast food.—A.L. (10/10/94) (Angelika Film Center, Murray Hill Cinemas, Beekman, East 85th Street, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, and Embassy.)

Quiz Show—Robert Redford's movie is a speedy, absorbing chronicle of a trivial show-business scandal of the fifties: the rigging of big-money quiz shows. The screenplay, by Paul Attanasio, tries hard to sell some sweeping ideas about the class dynamics of American society, and doesn't quite succeed. The picture's real strength is its witty, vigorous evocation of the fifties media world. It hums along like a well-constructed farce, and its crazy momentum carries it over the bumps of social significance. Ralph Fiennes, John Turturro, and Rob Morrow have the largest roles, but they're outshone by the supporting players: Paul Scofield, Mira Sorvino, Christopher McDonald, Allan Rich, Hank Azaria, Barry Levinson, and—best of all—David Paymer.—T.R. (9/19/94) (Village Theatre VII, Cinema II, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Guild, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

Radioland Murders—Steven Spielberg gave us "1941"; now his pal George Lucas simulates 1939, in another numbingly frantic pop period comedy, this time about murder in a Chicago radio station on the première night of a new national network. The prototypically nice Mary Stuart Masterson is the good scout who holds the studio together; the engaging Brian Benben (of HBO's "Dream On") is her estranged writer husband, who must save his marriage, crack the case, and complete the evening's scripts. They're swamped in pushy slapstick and confetti-cut showbiz re-creations. At ten million dollars, this must be the cheapest over-produced movie ever made. The squandered ensemble includes Ned Beatty, Michael McKean, Jeffrey Tambor, Stephen Tobolowsky, Bobcat Goldthwaite, Christopher Lloyd, Robert Klein, Harvey Korman, Dylan Baker, Peter MacNicol, Anne DeSalvo, and the late Anita Morris. Lucas wrote the original story and executive-produced. Mel Smith directed the script by Willard Huyck and Gloria Katz, and Jeff Reno and Ron Osborn.—M.S. (34th St. East, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th St. Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, and National Twin.)

The River Wild—A family led by plucky supermom Meryl Streep goes on a white-water-rafting vacation out West and gets a hairier trip than it bargained for when the raft is hijacked by a pair of desperate crooks. The audience, however, gets precisely what *it* bargained for: safe, predictable thrills, with a light spray of dysfunctional-family drama. Curtis Hanson's direction is expert, but the screenplay, by Denis O'Neill, is so formulaic that the picture is never more than moderately exciting; you can see around every bend in this river.—T.R. (34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Ziegfeld, and Regency.)

The Road to Wellville—Turn-of-the-century health fanatics run wild at the Battle Creek spa run by cereal magnate Dr. John Harvey Kellogg (Anthony Hopkins). With Bridget Fonda, Matthew Broderick, John Cusack, and Dana Carvey. Written and directed by Alan Parker. (Village Theatre VII, Murray Hill Cinemas, Baronet, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Olympia.)



(Clockwise from top left) Bridget Fonda, John Cusack, Anthony Hopkins, and Matthew Broderick in "The Road to Wellville."

Robert A. Heinlein's The Puppet Masters—Donald Sutherland stars as a desperate scientist in this thriller, based on Heinlein's science-fiction novel, about alien parasites who control the minds of their human hosts. Directed by Stuart Orme. (Village East Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, Chelsea Cinemas, Metro Cinema, and Embassy.)

The Shawshank Redemption—Tim Robbins returns to his best form with his haunted, cunning portrayal of Andy Dufresne, a young banker sentenced to life imprisonment in the nineteen-forties. Frank Darabont's movie never grabs at you, preferring to work patiently on your sympathies and nerves while finding time for casual jokes. What at first seems like a plotless tale of companionship—principally between Andy and a fixer named Red (Morgan Freeman)—tightens into excitement. The picture stays on track and leaves you, appropriately enough, with a surging sense of release.—A.L. (9/26/94) (Village Theatre VII, Coronet, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and National Twin.)

Silent Fall—Richard Dreyfuss stars in a Bruce Beresford film about a disillusioned former child psychologist enlisted to treat an autistic nine-year-old boy who may have been a witness to a double homicide. With Linda Hamilton, John Lithgow, J. T. Walsh, Ben Faulkner, and Liv Tyler. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Columbus Circle.)

The Specialist—Cheesecake meets beefcake as Sharon Stone persuades an ex-C.I.A. explosives ace (Sylvester Stallone) to wreak vengeance on Miami mobsters. Stallone's archenemy (James Woods, of course) heads security for these Cuban bad guys (led by Eric Roberts and Rod Steiger). The screenwriter, Alexandra Seros, gives every character a wit impediment. Steiger's accent prompts nervous laughter: "You bastard!" comes out "Jew bastard!" Luis Llosa directed.—M.S. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

StarGate—Elementary sci-fi about a hieroglyphics expert (James Spader) and a U.S. military squad (led by Kurt Russell) who zip to a distant planet via the title portal, last used in ancient Egypt. They discover that Ra (Jaye Davidson of "The Crying Game"), the sun god of the Pharaohs, is alive and well and a vicious alien. Russell's pointed understatement, Spader's fuzzy comedy stylings, and a few dandy props and designs can't elevate this matinée fodder above the level of George Pal's "Atlantis, the Lost Continent." The intended audience seems to be ten-year-olds; Davidson is like a camp Disney witch. Directed by Roland Emmerich from a script by Emmerich and Dean Devlin.—M.S. (34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Vanya on 42nd Street—Louis Malle's astonishingly beautiful film documents a stage production, directed by André Gregory, of Chekhov's "Uncle Vanya." The conceit is that the actors—wearing street clothes and clutching take-out coffee—have gathered for a run-through of the play; as the performance goes along, our sense of the theatrical reality gives way to the more intimate feeling of belief that movies create. The picture is, among other things, a splendid demonstration of how great art seduces us, has its way with us. It's designed to give the audience the experience of total surrender to theatrical illusion, and Malle and Gregory and the actors—especially Wallace Shawn, as Vanya, and Julianne Moore, as Yelena—earn their victory honestly. The style of the movie seems, finally, to merge with the play itself: nothing appears to be happening, yet everything is transformed. Also with Brooke Smith, Larry Pines, and George Gaynes. The superb adaptation is by David Mamet.—T.R. (10/31/94) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Wes Craven's New Nightmare—Or, "Freddy Does Deconstruction." Although the "Nightmare on Elm Street" series officially ended three years ago, the conceit here is that Freddy Krueger refuses to be stopped—not even when he hits the "fourth wall." The only way to keep him from entering the real world is to trap him in another "Nightmare" movie—this one. Heather Langenkamp (of the first and third films), now the mother of a young son (Miko Hughes), gets pulled back into the horror. For a while, Craven, who wrote and directed the original, brews potent paranoia out of earthquake scares, parental fears of media violence, and gory special-effects sprees. But there are far too many wake-up-screaming

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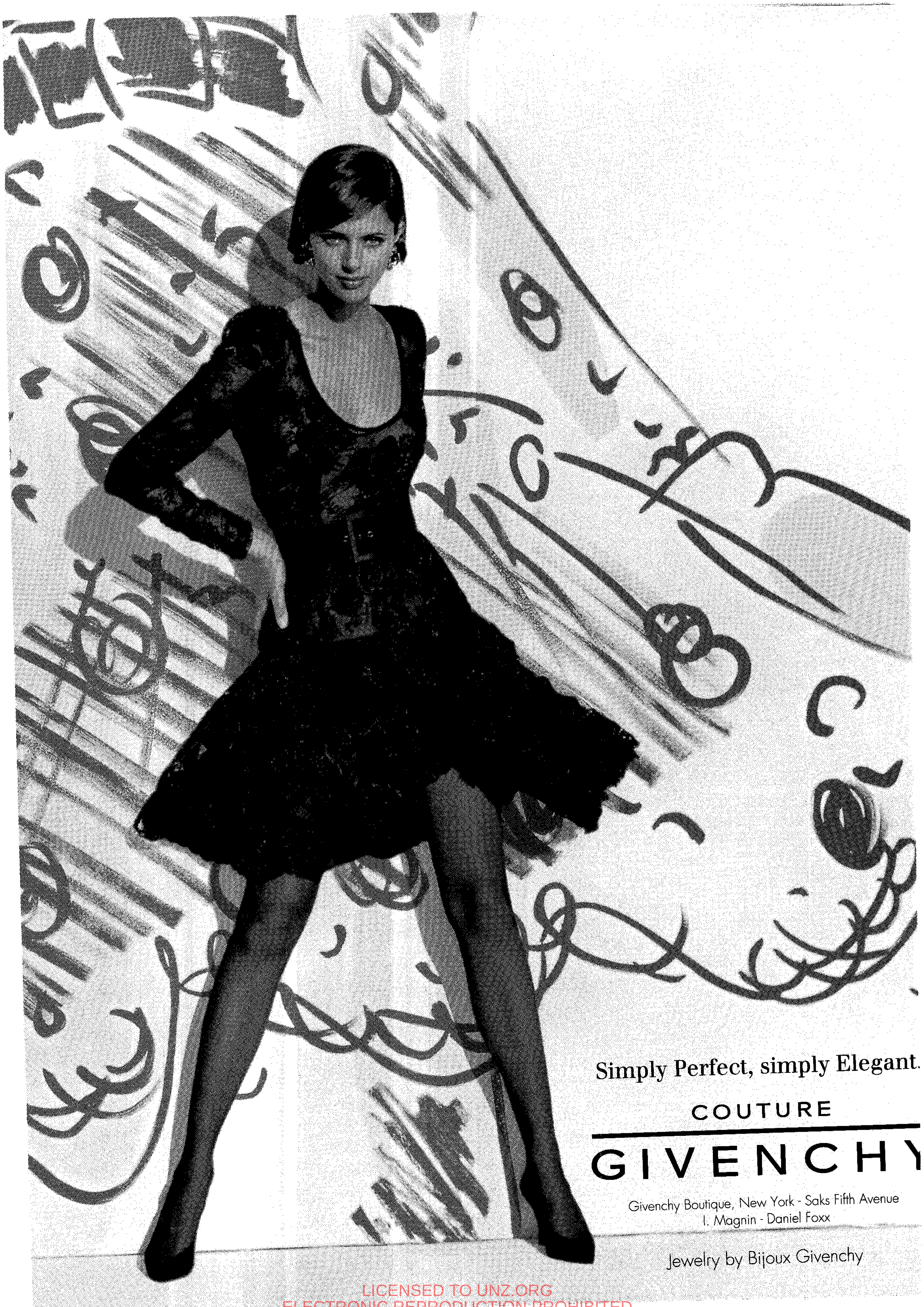
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CURRENT FILMS—Cont'd

scenes, even for a "Nightmare" movie. With Robert Englund and John Saxon.—M.S. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center.)

What Happened Was . . .—Written and directed by Tom Noonan, this two-character study stars Noonan as an overqualified paralegal and Karen Sillas as an executive assistant in the same law firm. It takes place in the woman's Manhattan apartment, where he arrives for a dinner that she intends to be a full-blown date. On paper it doesn't amount to anything more than an expression of sympathy for crippled, melancholy souls. In performance the lanky, intimacy-deflecting Noonan and the fleshy, moody Sillas make it a virtuosic turn: a dissociated duet.—M.S. (Angelika 57.)

THEATRE ADDRESSES

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000).
Little Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171).
Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th (477-6600).
Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th (982-0400).
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th (924-3363).
Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th (529-6799).
19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th (260-8000).
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th (689-6548).
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th (532-5544).
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th (683-0255).
Eastside Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 55th (755-3020).
Sutton I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th (759-1411).
Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th (759-2262).
Plaza, 42 E. 58th (355-3320).
Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th (935-6420).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th (759-4630).
Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th (355-1663).
Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th (753-6022).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd (513-5408).
Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th (832-1670).
Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th (737-2622).
New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th (744-7339).
68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th (734-0302).
Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st (879-1313).
East 85th Street, 1st Ave. at 85th (249-5100).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th (534-1880).
Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th (876-2400).
86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th (249-1144).

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110).
Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd (929-8037).
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th (929-3350).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th (255-8800).
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd (513-5402).
23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd (989-0060).
Guild, 33 W. 50th (757-2406).
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583).
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th (765-7600).
57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th (581-7360).
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th (265-2520).
Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th (586-1900).
Paris, 4 W. 58th (980-5656).
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th (752-5959).
Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st (247-5070).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd (265-7466).
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, B'way at 63rd (757-2280).
Regency, B'way at 67th (724-3700).
84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th (877-3600).
Metro Cinema I and 2, B'way at 99th (222-1200).
Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th (865-8128).

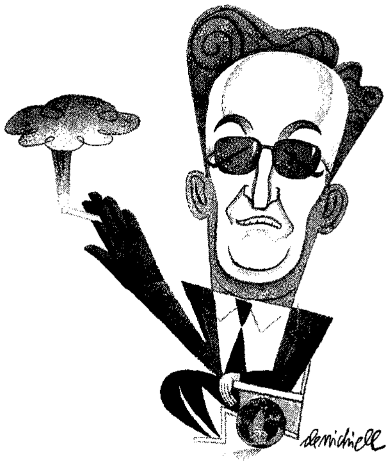
TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th (354-0900).
Embassy I, B'way at 46th (302-0494).
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th (730-7262).
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way (869-8340).
National Twin, B'way at 44th (869-0950).

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the film-library listings following these notes.)

Autumn Leaves (1956)—Robert Aldrich piling on the garish melodrama and working up a storm of emotional anguish. He holds your attention even though some part of you is giggling while you watch Joan Crawford take as her husband Cliff Robertson, who is not well in the head. He tosses objects at her (including a standard typewriter), and she heaves, gasps, and rolls her large eyes, but persists in being understanding. What's eating him is that in his first marriage (to Vera Miles) he was cuckolded by his own rotten dad (Lorne Greene). It eventually becomes evident to the hand-wringing, knuckle-gnawing Crawford that *something* has to be done, but not until after she does a lot of striding up and down.—P.K. (A Different Light Bookstore; Nov. 6.)



At Film Forum 2, Peter Sellers in "Dr. Strangelove."

Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1963)—Stanley Kubrick's jet-black anti-nuke farce is finally being projected in the narrower screen format the writer-director intended—close to the shapes of old movies, TV tubes, and standard comic-book panels. It's the perfect frame for Kubrick's devastating deadpan burlesque of (among other things) sappy Hollywood war sagas, gassy newsreel coverage, and, above all, theories about acceptable nuclear atrocities that belong in futuristic nightmare comics or *Mad.* In ninety-three jolting minutes, Kubrick and his co-writers, Terry Southern and Peter George (who wrote the original novel, "Red Alert"), depict what happens when Sterling Hayden's deranged General Jack D. Ripper orders a nuclear attack, Slim Pickens' wily Major (King) Kong delivers his B-52's payload in Russia, and the top Yanks in the war room try to pick up the pieces.The moviemakers establish a cutthroat satiric tone and the cast carries it through, from Pickens and Hayden to Peter Sellers in three roles (the mad Teuton Strangelove, a Stevenson-like president, a low-key British captain) and George C. Scott, who's at his juiciest and funniest as General Buck Turgidson.—M.S. (Film Forum 2; starting Nov. 4.)

Frankenstein (1931)—Probably the most famous of all horror films, and one of the best. It was not the first film version of the Mary Shelley novel (there had been a "Frankenstein" as early as 1910), but this version, directed by James Whale, with Boris Karloff as the sad, lumbering Monster and Colin Clive as the high-strung, tormented Dr. Frankenstein, caught

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PROJECTIONS

Music with Bite

FIVE weeks ago, the makers of "Interview with a Vampire" decided that the movie's score, which had been composed by George Fenton, was, in the words of David Geffen, one of the producers, "too funereal." Geffen and Neil Jordan, the director of the film (it will open November 11), decided that they wanted something "more adventurous," so they scrapped Fenton's music and turned to Elliot Goldenthal, who has provided the scores for such films as "Alien^3" and "Drugstore Cowboy." Goldenthal, who is forty, studied with John Corigliano and Aaron Copland, and has collaborated on several music-theatre works with his wife, the director Julie Taymor. Lately, his name has been as likely to turn up in the credits of a Warner Bros. picture as Max Steiner's was during the studio's golden era. Besides "Interview," Goldenthal has inherited Danny Elfman's old job of writing music for the "Batman" movies, the next installment of which, "Batman Forever," is currently shooting in Los Angeles. And Goldenthal's score for the Christmas release "Cobb," starring Tommy Lee Jones, helps sustain that film's dark look at the life of a baseball legend.

"While I composed 'Cobb' I was at times thinking of Richard Strauss's 'Four Last Songs,' " Goldenthal said last week. He was working through the night in a studio at the Manhattan Center—the building where, as it happens, Strauss's "Elektra" had its American première, in 1910. For "Interview," Goldenthal wanted his music to parallel the span of time—two centuries—that the movie traverses. In one scene, the mood may be Monteverdian. In another, a viola da gamba sets the pace. And in a third—for a scene in which the vampire (Tom Cruise) warbles a well-known melody from "The Marriage of Figaro"—a single violin suffices. The story, Goldenthal says, required him to evoke emotions ranging "from the horrific to the romantic."

The score's passionate ingenuity will probably please Anne Rice, the author of the 1976 novel on which the movie is based. (Her ecstatic "open letter" praising the film was based on a viewing of the version with Fenton's original music.) But the novelist is going to have at least one quibble with the soundtrack, even though it has nothing to do with Goldenthal's work. At the end of "Interview," moviegoers will hear a new Guns N' Roses recording of "Sympathy for the Devil." Rice, characteristically, would have preferred "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction."

— BRENDAN LEMON

REVIVALS–Cont'd

the imagination of a large public—and has held it for decades. With Mae Clarke, John Boles, Edward Van Sloan, and Dwight Frye as the Monster's first victim.—P.K. (Cinema Village; starting Nov. 4.)

THE GOLDEN COACH (1953)—At his greatest, Jean Renoir expressed the beauty in our common humanity; that's what Anna Magnani at *her* greatest also expressed. This movie—his tribute to the commedia dell'arte—is also a tribute to her fabulous gifts, and she gives the film its gusto. We see her here not only as a sensual, earthy "woman of the people" but as an artist who exhausts her resources in creating the illusion of volcanic reality. Though Renoir has taken Prosper Mérimée's vehicle and shaped it for her, it will be forever debatable whether it contains her or she explodes it. But as this puzzle is parallel with the theme—a Pirandellian confusion of theatre and everyday life—it adds another layer to the ironic comedy. The film is set in a dusty frontier in Renaissance Peru: a band of Italian strolling players is attempting to bring art to South America. The movie has been compared to "Così Fan Tutte"—it is light and serious, cynical and beautiful, a blend of color, wit, and Vivaldi music. The film was made in English; though Magnani herself, in her first English-speaking role, is vocally magnificent, some of the other actors speak in dreary tones and some of the minor characters appear to be dubbed. This was Renoir's second color film (after "The River"), and his directorial rhythm seems to falter in his work in color, but in the flow and warmth of "The Golden Coach" this defect, like the others, is trifling. —P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Nov. 4 and 6.)

HUMAN DESIRE (1954)—Fritz Lang's melodramatic Hollywood version of Zola's novel about blind instinct, "La Bête Humaine," which had been turned into a classic film by Jean Renoir in 1938. There's nothing very special about this updated version, set in America, and starring Glenn Ford, Gloria Grahame as a ruthless, taunting wife, and Broderick Crawford as her jealous husband. Lang didn't want to make the film but was contractually forced into it by Columbia, which hoped for a success comparable to his "The Big Heat" of the year before, also with Grahame and Ford. With lots of high angles and night scenes.—P.K. (Florence Gould Hall; Nov. 8.)

MAY FOOLS (1990)—Louis Malle's film takes place in May, 1968, when, for a few chaotic weeks, French society seemed on the verge of remaking itself: students were rioting, workers were striking, and the country came to a standstill. The characters in this picture are far removed from the stirring street theatre of May '68, but they're affected by it nonetheless. The setting is a shabby estate presided over by Milou (Michel Piccoli), a genial man in his sixties who lives the life of a lazy country sensualist: he keeps bees, browns in the sun, and gropes the housekeeper. On the sunny day when the story begins, his mother dies, and he summons the rest of the family for the funeral and the reading of the will. There's a sense that things are about to change, both on the large scale of French society and on the infinitely smaller one of Milou's life. Malle and his co-writer, Jean-Claude Carrière, use the upheaval of May '68 very deftly: it intrudes on their comedy like distant thunder on a sunny day, but the threatened downpour of Meaning never develops—we get a cooling shower of light ironies instead. Piccoli gives one of the best performances of his long career: he's vigorous and radiantly good-humored. Although its charm sometimes feels a bit too easy, the film is enjoyable throughout. It just bounces along to the rhythm of its remarkable score, composed and played by the eighty-two-year-old jazz violinist Stéphane Grappelli; the movie, like the music, has a delicate swing to it. In French.—T.R. (Symphony Space; Nov. 8.)

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

FILM FORUM 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)—Through Nov. 3: "Diabolique" (1955, Henri-Georges Clouzot; in French). . . . ¶ From Nov. 4: "Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb" (†).

LITTLE THEATRE, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-1717)—"Spanish Eyes III: Classics from the Spanish Cinema, 1960-75." Through Nov. 3: "Mi Querida Señorita" (1971, Jaime de Armiñan) and "La Busca" (1966, Angelino Fons). . . . ¶ Nov. 4-6: "Llanto por un Bandido" (1963, Carlos Saura), "La Tia Tula" (1964, Miguel Picazo), and "El Verdugo" (1963, Luis García Berlanga). . . . ¶ From Nov. 8: "Llanto por un Bandido"; and "Nueve Cartas a Berta" (1965, Basilio Martín Patino).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films directed by Jean Renoir. Nov. 3 at 2:30 and Nov. 4 at 6: "Tire au Flanc" (1928). . . . Nov. 3 at 6 and Nov. 5 at 2: "Le Tournoi" (1928). . . . Nov. 4 at 2:30: "Diary of a Chambermaid" (1946). . . . Nov. 4 at 8:15 and Nov. 6 at 2: "The Golden Coach" (†). . . . Nov. 5 at 5 and Nov. 7 at 2:30: "Picnic on the Grass" (1968). . . . Nov. 6 at 5: "The River" (1961). . . . Nov. 7 at 6: "La Marseillaise" (1937). . . . Nov. 8 at 2:30: "Madame Bovary" (1933). . . . Nov. 8 at 6: "On Purge Bébé" (1931). . . . ¶ Nov. 3 at 3 and 6: "Diamonds in the Snow" (1994, Mira Raym Binford). . . . ¶ A program of silent films by the Russian director Evgenii Bauer. Nov. 4 at 3: "First Love" (1915) and "The Happiness of Eternal Night" (1915). . . . Nov. 4 at 6: *"The Lady Killer" (1915). . . . Nov. 4 at 8 and* Nov. 6 at 3: "The King of Paris" (1917). . . . Nov. 5 at 3: "Cold Showers" (1914) and "A Life for a Life" (1916). . . . Nov. 5 at 5: "Silent Witness" (1914) and "Children of the Age" (1916). . . . Nov. 6 at 5: "Glory to Us, Death to the Enemy" (1914) and "The Revolutionary" (1917). . . . Nov. 7 at 3: "The Alarm" (1917). . . . ¶ Nov. 7 at 6:30: A program of films by Lynne Sachs and Mark Street.

WALTER READE THEATRE, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—A program of films directed by Francesco Rosi. Nov. 2 at 2 and Nov. 3 at 6:30: "Three Brothers" (1981). . . . Nov. 2 at 4:15 and 8:15 and Nov. 3 at 4: "To Forget Palermo" (1991). . . . Nov. 2 at 6:30 and Nov. 3 at 2: "Neapolitan Diary" (1992). . . . Nov. 3 at 8:45: "Chronicle of a Death Foretold" (1987). . . . ¶ Nov. 4 at 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10; Nov. 5 at 4, 6, 8, and 10; Nov. 6 at 4, 6, and 8; Nov. 7 at 2, 4, 6, and 8; and Nov. 8 at 2 and 4: "The Devil, Probably" (1977, Robert Bresson; in French). . . . ¶ Nov. 5-6 at 2: "Ebb Tide" (1937, James Hogan).

A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Nov. 6 at 7, the feature will be "Autumn Leaves" (†).

QUEENS MUSEUM OF ART, Flushing Meadows Park. (1-718 592-9700)—Nov. 5 at 2: "Glory Alley" (1952, Raoul Walsh), with Ralph Meeker, Leslie Caron, Gilbert Roland, Louis Armstrong, and John McIntire.

FLORENCE GOULD HALL, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Nov. 8 at 12:30 and 6: "La Bête Humaine" (1938, Jean Renoir; in French), with Jean Gabin, Simone Simon, Carette, Fernand Ledoux, Blanchette Brunoy, and Renoir himself. . . . ¶ Nov. 8 at 3:15 and 8:45: "Human Desire" (†).

SYMPHONY SPACE, B'way at 95th St. (864-5400)—Nov. 8 at 7: "May Fools" (†). . . . ¶ Nov. 8 at 9: "The Rules of the Game" (1939, Jean Renoir; in French), with Marcel Dalio and Nora Gregor.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—"Breaking Home Ties: Jewish Themes in Silent Cinema." Nov. 5 at 2: "Humoresque" (1920, Frank Borzage). . . . Nov. 5 at 4:30: "Yizkor" (1924, Sidney M. Goldin). . . . Nov. 6 at 2: "The Unfortunate Bride" (1932, Maurice Schwartz and Henry Lynn). . . . Nov. 6 at 4: "The Jazz Singer" (1927, Alan Crosland), with Al Jolson.

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is the dominance
of the whole
over the parts
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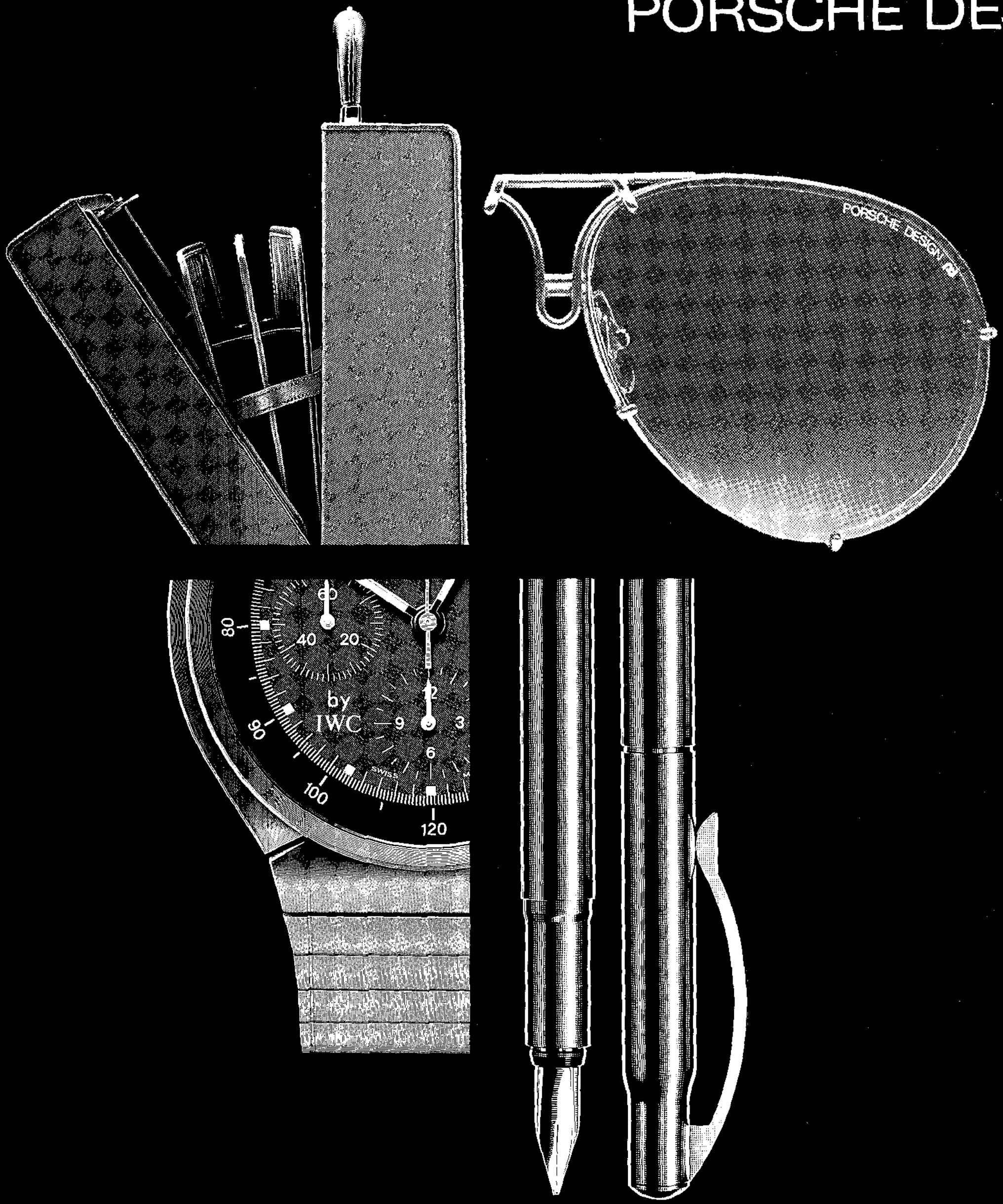

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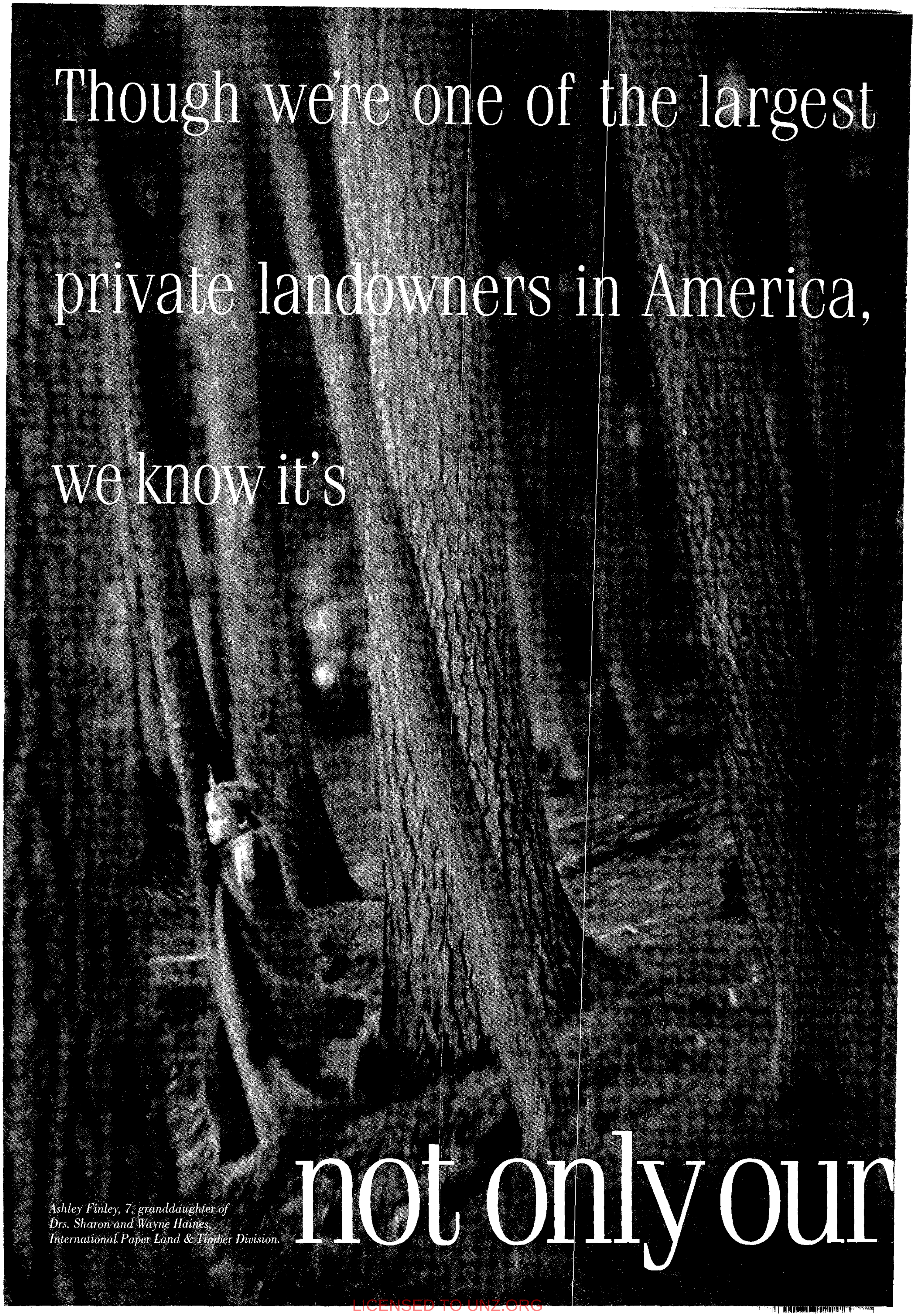
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we know it's
not only our

Ashley Finley, 7, granddaughter of Drs. Sharon and Wayne Haines, International Paper Land & Timber Division.

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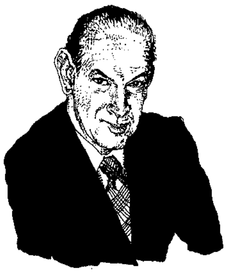
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Fashion designers uptown and downtown get ready for this week's shows in Bryant Park.

BY SUSAN ORLEAN



OSCAR DE LA RENTA is on the phone, in a large office off his studio. His three design assistants—Jack Alexander, Roseangela Brea, and John Nickleson—are in the studio, along with his public-relations assistant, Frankie Crocker, trying to figure out which stockings to use for de la Renta's spring runway show. In the center of the studio is a tall model with slumped shoulders, doe eyes, and short shiny hair. She's wearing a black-and-white skirt and a black top. Her legs are bare.

"Try tan," Alexander says. Brea pulls a new package of tan stockings out of a drawer, hands them to the model, and then walks across the room. On a bulletin board behind her, fabric swatches marked "Spring '95" flutter like tiny flags.

"What do you think about shoe fabric?" Alexander says. "I think it would be kind of fun if they had that glittery quality—not disco exactly, but like that." Everyone nods. The model disappears into the dressing room. After a moment, she emerges with one tan leg.

"That's scary-looking," Alexander says.

"Don't even show Oscar that leg," Brea says.

"I'm starting my insomnia," Crocker says, to Brea. "It's always around the show. I'm getting . . . you know, that *feeling*, and I can't sleep." Brea smiles at her without moving her eyes from the model. The model is staring at herself in the mirror, pivoting first on her tan leg and then on her bare one.

"It looks like something happened to her," Brea says, pointing to the tan leg. "Where did she get that leg?"

"The tan is really awful," Alexander says. "Go back to the sheer."

"Actually," the model says, "I have to go. I'm going to the movies. I'm sorry, but I have to go." She pulls the tan stocking off her leg and leaves it on the floor beside a row of high heels that are packed in Ziploc bags. As the model walks into the dressing room, Nancy Kissinger, in baggy bluejeans and a saggy sweater, walks out. She is followed by a small woman carrying a bag of straight pins and gasping, "Oh, oh, oh, oh." Everyone sits in silence. A minute passes. Finally, Oscar de la Renta steps out of his office. His cheeks are petal pink, and he has a smooth, egg-shaped head. He looks dressed for lunch at a club. "She left?" he asks Nickleson.

"She had to go," Nickleson says. "The model. She had to meet someone."

De la Renta pulls his face into a faint frown. He rummages around on the top of a table, picks up a green brassiere, and says, "We must do all this stuff, the Wonderbra, the other bra—ah, whatever." He puts the bra down and then says, "Call Luigi, O.K.?" He glances around the room. He sees Brea and gives her a beckoning look. "Rose, can you put this on?" He holds up a gold-embroidered jacket with quilted lining. "Isn't this nice? I found it in the Marché aux Puces, in Paris." Brea puts on the jacket. A tailor comes in and stands, half bent, near the door.

"Luigi," de la Renta says, "I am thinking. Can you make me this jacket? I like the jacket, but I don't like the sleeves. Could you make me one and drop it here and drop it there"—he pinches the waist—"and change the sleeve? Good, good, good. I truly like the idea." De la Renta takes the jacket off Brea and shakes it, and for a moment, holding it out, away from his body, he looks like a matador.

●

REMEMBER: If you aren't a confirmed but you've got a secondary, you still are not necessarily next in line after the tentative. Sorry. Book your runway models often and early—at least, if you want some of the really good girls from Ford Models. Bridget Hall? Forget about it, unless you happen to have asked Ford to put her on hold for your show about a million years ago. Naomi? In your dreams. Christy? Tricia? Shalom? *Are you serious*? This late in the game, you could *maybe* get a low-on-the-list secondary option on one of them, which means you would be one of many designers they will choose among if they decide not to confirm their tentative, who is first in line but still only a tentative until the girls absolutely commit and the tentative becomes a confirmed. Whatever. A few days before the start of the collections, the people at Oscar de la Renta get a nice surprise: Veronica Webb. Susan Devine, the director of Ford's Runway Division, makes the call. "Frankie, it's me," she says into the phone, to Frankie Crocker. The computer in front of Devine is scrolling through the list of models Isaac Mizrahi has on hold. At the moment, they're just tentatives. Devine taps a few keys and switches to the de la Renta screen. "So, Frankie, I've got *great* news. I originally gave you a secondary on Veronica, and I'm calling to tell you that she will be available, so I'm moving you up to a tentative." She listens for a moment, says goodbye, smiles, and hangs up.

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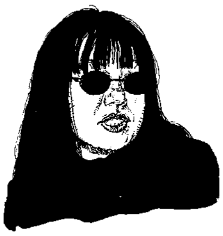


WHEN Anna Sui really likes something, she declares it So Teen-Age Girl. Sui is a wide-boned woman with a round face, black hair cut into a long bob, and a dainty, sweet voice that sounds like a piccolo. She greatly admires teen-age girls, but in fact has not been a teen-age girl for quite some time. Her clothes are cute and sassy, and nostalgic for important eras in ancient history, like the early seventies—So Teen-Age Girl. This evening, Karen Erickson, a small, high-strung woman whose company makes jewelry and accessories for Sui and a dozen other designers, is bringing samples of what she's working on for Sui's spring show. Erickson is hoping that at least some of what she's got—maybe the plastic sequinned cherries, maybe the beaded lariats, maybe the purple snakeskin bangles—will get Sui's approval.

Sui is in her studio—a thicket of racks and boxes and fabric rolls in a creaky Garment District building. She clears a patch of floor near her desk, and Erickson removes a stack of velvet trays from a paper bag. "Wow, wow, wow, looking good," Sui says. "Let me get my glasses. Wow."

"Now, we talked about a million different things," Erickson says, sounding worried. She scatters a bunch of pins and earrings on the floor. There are also shiny lariats and beaded bows and butterfly brooches, and bright-red sequinned cherries made up as earrings, and other cherries hanging from chains, and dullish-yellow cherries made up as pins. One of the red-cherry earrings rolls into a corner.

"Gorgeous," Sui says, surveying the jewelry. "Great." She picks up a cherry. "Heavenly. *So* great." She puts it down and brushes her bangs out of her eyes. "Karen, I've been watching all these Betty Grable movies, and they're just heaven movies, and it makes me want everything very Hollywoody."

"Absolutely," Erickson says. "We can do Hollywoody."

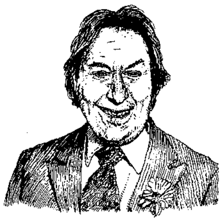
Sui says, "I found these great plastic leis that I want to bejewel. I think it would be so great. I was thinking we could do vice jewelry, too, to go with the gangster group." Erickson nods and takes notes. They talk about the difficulty of finding good hula skirts and interesting colored dice. Sui picks up one of the yellow cherries while they're talking. Erickson's face tightens a little. She says, "Anna, remember, that's not the yellow it's going to be. It's going to be gorgeous yellow. Bright, great yellow. That's awful. That's yuck. That's just to show you."

Sui says, "I know. Wow, though, I do love them. We could do brooches, couldn't we? We could do necklaces and huge cherry earrings, right? We could do hair things with them? They're adorable, I think. They're just, you know . . . I think they're just *So* Teen-Age Girl."

•

ARNOLD SCAASI is draping. "I think it's ravishing now," he says, bunching a piece of silk jersey across a model's shoulder and pinning it down. "Look at that turquoise—so pretty. I love it. Don't you?" It is midmorning, but his model is in full evening wear—a slinky, strapless floor-length column of silk jersey crunched and gathered across the bodice. Now Scaasi is philosophizing: "I think if a woman spends three thousand dollars on a dress, she ought to be able to wear it for more than one season, don't you?" Now Scaasi is editorializing on Scaasi: "*Pretty*. That's the Scaasi objective. Making a woman look pretty."

The air-conditioner grumbles. Scaasi is bright, smooth-faced, elfin, blondish. Today, he is wearing a white cotton shirt with a high and widespread collar, a rep tie, a double-breasted navy blazer, gray gabardine slacks, and a red pincushion on his wrist, like a corsage. The model, in her strapless evening dress, is covered with goose pimples. Scaasi waves her away to try on another dress. This season, he will present his collection—the draped gowns, the taffeta evening wear, the luncheon suits, the pastel afternoon dresses with matching jackets—in a regal manner, inviting buyers and customers to private showings in his salon on Fifth Avenue, a peaceful room with mouse-colored carpeting and lemon-yellow doors and enormous bouquets of yellow silk flowers. It is the sort of place that would be familiar to you if you have ever had your highlights done at a topnotch hair salon or played bridge in the ladies' cardroom at a country club. As it happens, both of these would be occasions that might call for a Scaasi.



Scaasi says that sometimes when he sees one of his dresses finished, on a model, in a showing, he will look at it and think, Awful—how did I do that? Other times, he'll think, Gorgeous—I can't believe I did that. He says that even though he's been making dresses for twenty years he still gets in a dither when the collection is about to be shown. The model steps out in another draped evening dress. Now Scaasi looks at her and starts debating. "Stunning. Don't

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1) Oscar de la Renta,
550 Seventh Ave.
2) Ford Models,
344 E. 59th St.
3) Anna Sui,
275 W. 39th St.
4) Arnold Scaasi, 681 Fifth Ave.
5) Ghost,
241 W. 37th St.
6) Geoffrey Beene,
37 W. 57th St.
7) Christian Francis Roth,
18 E. 17th St.
8) Kevin Krier & Associates,
84 Wooster St.
9) Kitty Boots, 315 Park Ave. South.
10) Joan Vass, 117 E. 29th St.
11) Bill Blass, 550 Seventh Ave.
12) Manolo, 480 Broadway.

you love this fabric? I'd call this color burgundy. Or maybe wine. Maybe ruby. Or perhaps claret. Whatever you call it, it's ravishing. It's great to wear with a tan."

•

GHOST is an English label designed by Tanya Sarne. It's a groovy, downtown-scene kind of label—at least, according to Jean-Marc Flack, of Showroom Seven, which represents Ghost in the United States. Most of the big models do the Ghost show, but they don't do it for money; they do it for Tanya, who then gives them free Ghost clothes. The Ghost show, being a groovy, downtown-scene kind of show, often draws an overenthusiastic audience. Last year, Mariah Carey, Juliana Hatfield, Donovan Leitch, Sofia Coppola, David Byrne, and large numbers of uninvited fans turned up. Therefore, ungroovy uptown security is an issue. At the Market Diner this afternoon, Flack is meeting with Alexander De Betak, who is going to direct the Ghost show, and Erica Roseman, the publicist for Showroom Seven, and Benjamin Liu, a fashion consultant working for Ghost, to talk about the show and the party Tanya will be throwing afterward as a thank-you to the models. The show will be in the big tent at Bryant Park. The party will be in an abandoned synagogue on the Lower East Side. "O.K. Last year, communication was the weak point," De Betak says. "So I want everyone wearing headsets, and I want three, four phone lines set up directly into Tanya's hotel suite." Roseman is writing this down. "We're going to have to stay on top, because there are so many shoes and accessories to worry about."

"You know, because of all the different themes," Flack says.

Liu says, "There are six of them. That's a lot of themes in one show. What are they? I know that spiritualism is one of them. I think also Buddhist imagery. There's an underlying mandala interpretation in a seventies kind of way in one, and in an ethnic way in another, and there's a work theme, and a modern-flower-girl theme, and a theme of ladies who lunch, definitely."

Flack laughs, and says, "Ladies who lunch! That's so funny, because Ivana Trump is the original lady who lunches and she's a diehard Ghost fan. I'm sure she'll be at the show."

Liu nods. "Actually, it's her daughter, Ivanka, who's the fan. *Really*. She's eight or twelve, or something. She loves Ghost. I think Ivana just comes along."

The security is plotted. The four get up and walk over to the headquarters of Seventh on Sixth, the organization that oversees the Bryant Park fashion shows. Seventh on Sixth shares an office, on Broadway, with the Council of Fashion Designers of America—a rectangular room with the extravagant spaciousness of a sardine can. Rayvid, the orchestrator of the Bryant Park event, is sitting there at a jagged glass table with Jan Kroeze, a lighting designer. "Sorry about the mess," Rayvid says, to no one in particular. "We're about to move into a new space." The four Ghost representatives sit down. "I think we can start," Rayvid says. "O.K. First of all, who wants Evian water?" Everyone raises a hand and says, "I do." Someone brings out six skinny bottles of Evian.

"Now we can really start," Roseman says.

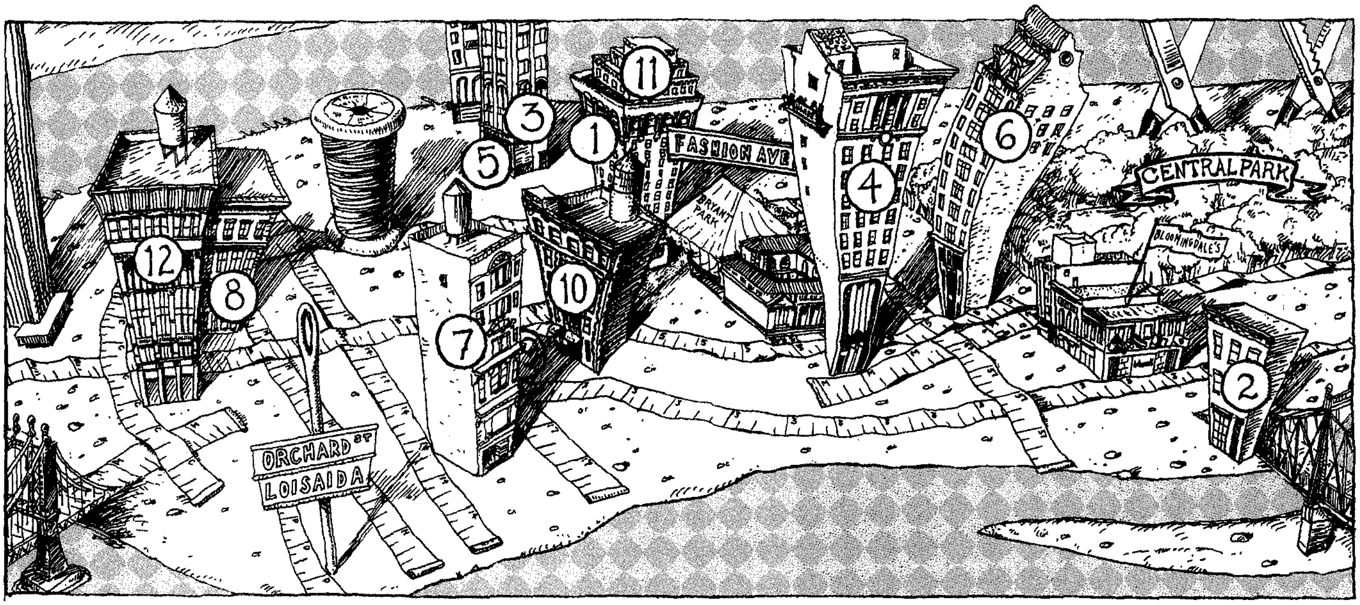
Rayvid leans forward on his elbows. "Let's talk about your backdrop. Do you want a color or a tone?"

De Betak says, "Uh, we don't know yet."

Rayvid says, "Well, Ralph's doing something custom. It's a major year for Ralph. He often uses sisal. Natural fibres. Anna Sui's using purple." He pauses and adds, "If it was a secret, I wouldn't have told you." He scribbles something on a pad of paper and says, "Now, for the runway we can do anything. We can do muslin, fabric, carpet. If you give us enough warning. We could do . . . we could even do *fur* if you gave us warning." He turns to Kroeze and says, "That would be kind of different, wouldn't it? A fur runway. Really *rich*."

Fern Mallis, the executive director of the C.F.D.A. and of Seventh on Sixth, which she helped found, comes over to the table. "How's it going?" she asks. "Sorry about the mess. We're about to move."

De Betak says, "We're worried about doing our hair and makeup in the



holding area. Is there somewhere we can set up?"

Mallis says, "We'll try to make room, but if they're going to do hot rollers and stuff—well, the hairdressers are all going to have to play by the same rules about time and space for setting up."

De Betak says, "Well, we know for sure that the show will be twenty-five minutes. Our show is *definitely* twenty-five minutes."

Rayvid sighs. "It would be better if it were twenty-two." He flips open a black notebook and stops at a page that says, "Seventh on Sixth Time Management." On it is a suggestion list that begins:

- Plan, plan, plan
- Work closely with your venue manager
- Please ask us questions
- Time your rehearsals—edit your collection

The next page is the April '94 Scorecard—a chart of every show at Seventh on Sixth, with a list of when each was supposed to start, when it actually started, when it was supposed to end, when it actually ended, and then who was best and worst in on-time performance. Rayvid pushes the notebook aside and says, "I mean, twenty-two *would* be better than twenty-five."

De Betak grins and says, "Bruce, I'll try to give you twenty-two. I guess Naomi Campbell will just have to run."

•

DEMI MOORE and some bums have been on Geoffrey Beene's mind lately. Specifically, he has been thinking about a restaurant in Santa Monica where he has seen Ms. Moore eat dinner. Patrons of this restaurant include various other celebrities and also non-celebrity street people. The restaurant, its jumbled clientele, the beach, the California sportiness, the visits with his aunt in Santa Monica when he was a child, plus some double-faced peach wool crêpe add up to a curvy coatdress that Beene is making for his spring collection, which he is calling Santa Monica. This afternoon, he is making tiny adjustments in the fit of the peach coatdress on a model with sleek brown hair and burgundy lipstick. The model is standing in the middle of his studio, on West Fifty-seventh Street. Two tailors and three design assistants are in a circle around her with their eyes cast down, as if she were naked. The model is gazing at Beene, who is standing slightly off to one side. He has silvery hair and the chest of a burgher. His voice is light and lazy. He has a lacy, casual laugh that rolls over itself like a tumbleweed. People around him murmur and blush and suck in their breath in quiet little puffs.

The model pulls on a pair of black net gloves.

"We love gloves," Beene says. "The hand implies humanity." He tilts his head toward his assistants and says, "We should put on the buttons."

One of the assistants, quietly: "The one with the little black dot inside?" Beene raises an eyebrow. The assistant breathes in and says, "The porcelain one?" He waits. "The hand-painted one?" An expression ripples across Beene's face. The assistant disappears into another room and then floats back in, carrying buttons. Beene lifts one of the buttons and says, "Oh, isn't it creamy-colored? That's what I'd like to see." The button assistant disappears. Beene says, "And isn't there a translucent pair of gloves?"

"Organza?" someone whispers.

Someone else: "Perhaps the pale net?"

"Yes," Beene says, exhaling deeply. "A sort of mother-of-pearl."

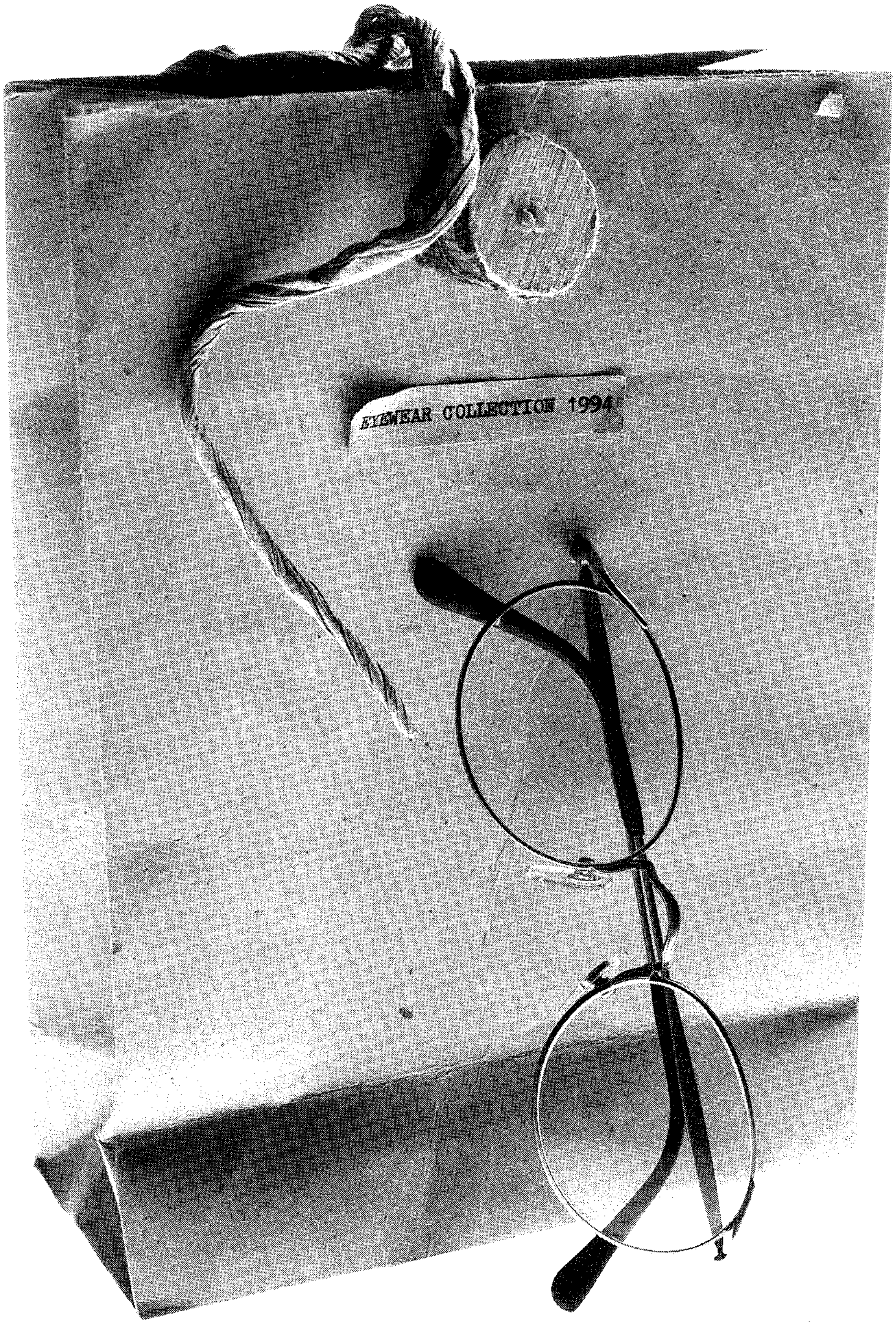
•

LATE in the afternoon, Christian Francis Roth is in Central Park with his dog, a friend, a Polaroid, some film, some audio equipment, and a sound engineer, looking for bounty for his fashion show. Roth makes whimsical suits and dresses that are often decorated with familiar images, like crayons or toys. He could be spending the afternoon in his studios near Union Square, designing outfits, but his spring-collection theme is Central Park, so, technically speaking, this is a work trip. He asks the sound guy to tape the chiming of the Delacorte Clock, and the raspy organ of the carrousel, and a skinny man with a flute who is playing for spare change under a bridge. Roth says, "This is great stuff. We'll play this over the loudspeakers at the show while people are getting seated." He loads the camera and takes about two hundred pictures—flowers, trees, a woman walking around with a parrot on her head, park benches, the plaster whale and the gingerbread house at the old Children's Zoo. "Perfect," he says. "We'll put these as little gifts in some of the programs at the show." As the daylight starts to fade, he takes an extracurricular ride on the carrousel. "Just for inspiration," he says.

•

WHO sits where at a fashion show is a big deal. There are people who work for designers and specialize in this sort of big deal. The tools of their trade are: a blueprint of the seats in the show tent; the seating plan from the designer's last show; a researcher to authenticate requests for invitations from industry people and also people claiming to be Madonna or Arnold or the President of the United States or the designer's best friend; pencils.

Of all these, pencils may be the most important, in case one of the guests has a last-minute change in his or her life situation which requires that his or her seat assignment be upgraded to the much desired front row or bounced to the back. Using pencils until the eleventh hour keeps your chart tidy and up to the minute. Once you go to ink, you're terminal. Kevin Krier, who is a person you would like to have on hand when you're trying to figure out how to arrange guests at your wedding, is sitting this morning with many pencils and with his associate Sheila Peevey, working on the seating plan for Todd Oldham's upcoming show. Krier is a solid guy with a ginger-colored buzz-cut and the sort of oven-roasted voice Lauren Bacall would envy. His public-relations firm is organizing shows this season for Victor Alfaro, Vidal Sassoon, Cotton Incorporated, Ellen Tracy, Nicole Miller, and Todd. Todd is one of the really crucial pencil-only situations, because his shows have become such popular fashion-season events, and because Todd has lots and



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lots of friends. In fact, Todd has friends he didn't even know he had. At last count, Todd Oldham attended high school with four hundred and fifty thousand people, all of whom really, really liked him back then, and all of whom now send Krier letters saying they would like to come and see how Todd is doing. The tent Todd's show will be in has eight hundred and sixty-five seats and standing room for a hundred and fifty. Ninety-eight per cent of the people invited to Todd's show—retailers, fashion writers, famous people, and friends—say yes. This would militate against also inviting the four hundred and fifty thousand high-school buddies. Also, in the past a certain number of people who weren't invited said yes in their own personal way and turned up at Todd's shows with quite convincing invitations of their own manufacture, so this year Krier will be using one that will be harder to counterfeit than a dollar bill. He and Peevey stare at the chart. Today, they want to do a rough plan, sorting people by category. Then they'll start pencilling in specific names.

Krier: "Maybe we should start like this: Retailer, retailer, retailer. Or how about CNN, retailer, CNN, CNN?"

Peevey: "I would go retailer, retailer, CNN, CNN."

Krier: "O.K., then how about the next row doing celebrity, celeb, retailer, celeb, celeb, retailer?"

Peevey: "I'd go retail, retail, retail, celeb."

Krier: "Don't forget we need a block for the singing celebrity group, then MTV. Then Julia Roberts. Then leave an empty seat there, for an emergency. Like if Queen Elizabeth wants to come at the last minute. Or the Pope."

Peevey writes on the chart with her pencil. "Oh-oh. Here goes my blood pressure. And what about RuPaul?"

Krier sighs. "Put him in the front, I guess. It's just that he's so *tall*."

•

KITTY BOOTS has made an executive decision: no crotch shots. This decision will be carried out by lowering the runway stairs at Webster Hall, the night club in the East Village where Kitty, Cesar Galindo, and the partners Walter Cessna and Simone Colina, who are all young and not yet mainstream designers, will be holding their shows. If the stairs remain at their present height, they will provide the audience with quite a heads-up angle on the models, and Kitty says her models usually appear minus their undergarments. Other important decisions the four are making this afternoon, as they meet with the manager of Webster Hall: no beer drinking by models before the show; no extra mirrors in the dressing rooms, because once you dress your models they develop tons of attitude and get on one another's nerves; no one allowed to get wild.

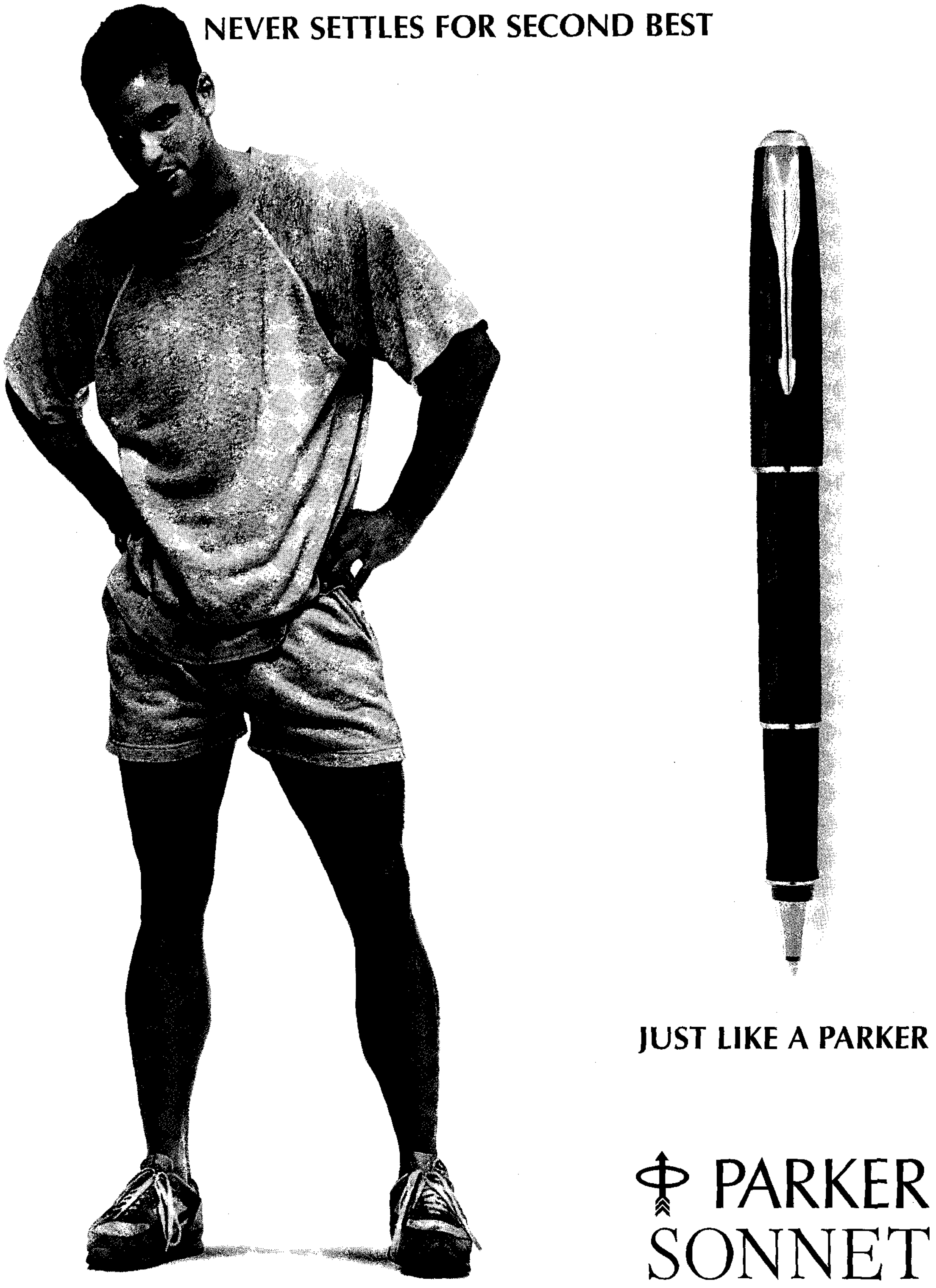
Kitty's models include dancers from a troupe called the House of Domination and the lead singers from a band called Fur and from a group called New York Loose, all of whom are very nice people but are in need of a firm hand on the controls. There are plenty of other worries. For instance, all the designers have to keep an eye on the money that it takes to put on a fashion show. After the meeting at Webster Hall, Kitty and Cesar walk over to a discount stationer, because they need envelopes for their invitations. Together, the four of them are sending out two thousand, and even a few cents extra per envelope starts to add up.

When they get to the store, Kitty suggests that they look in the back, where the cheap envelopes are. Kitty and Cesar head for the discount section and start searching for good colors. Walter and Simone have given them their proxy, because they had to go back to work. Kitty, who is wearing two of her own designs—a plaid redingote and a T-shirt with the word "MEOW" spelled out in hobnails—says her hallmark is rhinestony, vinyly, tarty clothes. Cesar is wearing a flappy earth-toned poncho, but he says that when it comes to designing he's into a glamour thing. He finds some pink envelopes that are the right size and are very inexpensive. He looks pleased. Leaving the store, he says, "The show is a step in the right direction, but I'm impatient. I want to do more shows, more clothes, more everything. I want a scent. I want a diffusion line. I want my name on your bedsheets. I want it all."

•

JOAN VASS is finished designing her collection, which makes her very nervous. It may also be that she is, generally speaking, the excitable sort. Vass is a trim woman with an Indian-summer tan and gray hair cropped like a hedgerow. This morning, she is wearing a black blazer that she designed twelve years ago, and a black T-shirt from her men's collection of eight years ago, and black elf shoes that she designed about four years ago, and a leopard-print skirt that she designed last year. The skirt is the sort of simple knitted piece she is known for. About her spring collection she says, "I've been finished for months. Months. Months. *Months*. Isn't everybody finished? Is anyone further along than me? They're not done? Who's not done?" She is sitting at her desk as she says this. In front of her is a heap of mail. Every few seconds, she flings a piece of junk mail or a catalogue out of her office, through the open doorway, and into her design studio. As a result, the studio, a big, beautiful loft with honey-colored floors, is littered with envelopes. Her patternmaker's dog, a Siberian husky, is sniffing Lands' End.

Vass says, "I've done twenty-five or thirty shows. I get ready early. Did you say no one else was finished yet?" She flings Harry & David Fruit of the Month Club into the other room. "By the way, I've never had a shoulder pad! Never! I've been in the business since 1977 and I've never had a shoulder pad!" J. Crew out the door. "I'm doing reversible dresses this spring. Someone has to tell the woman who's sewing in the labels not to put them where they can be seen when the dress is reversed. I can't speak Spanish. I have to get someone to tell her." Victoria's Secret, high and outside. "You know, I don't know if pink is in the air, but I did a lot of pink. Pink is beautiful. Of course, black is my favorite color." Publishers Clearing House, Tweeds, Chinese menu. "I really believe in environmentalism. I've been into it for a really long time. I'm not mainstream. I don't get the best models. I have the fortune of being a failure. I have the courage to fail. I don't really know anything about fashion. I do have a rule, though: no applied decoration. When I started in



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the business, I made a lot of undershirts. I called them M.B. Do you know who M.B. is? M.B.? Think hard. I can't say it. I can't say his name in vain. O.K., *Marlon Brando*. Look at me, I have goose bumps just thinking about it. I'm remembering seeing him perform Off-Off-Broadway. It was naked. It was the inside of a person." She stops in the middle of flinging and says, "Wait a *minute*, wait a *minute*." Then she stands up and walks through the snowdrift of junk mail, past the husky, past the racks of reversible dresses, to one of the sewing tables, where a seamstress is making a sample dress for the spring collection out of a silky tufted chenille.

Vass looks at the dress and says, "I really want a pocket. Why isn't that a pocket?" The seamstress shrugs. "I'll try, Joan. I think it will be lumpy, but I'll try." Vass clutches her chest and says, " 'Try' isn't good enough. Please. I need better than 'try.' That's million-dollar fabric!"

•

BILL BLASS: "The music man was just here. I told him what music I want to use at the show, and we had an enormous argument, for God's sake."

Craig Natiello, Blass's assistant: "Why don't you say what the hysteria was about? It's that you told him you didn't *want* to do Philip Glass for the show again."

Blass: "Well, of course I don't want to do it again! Not again, for God's sake! I want Ravel."

Natiello: "He was pushing something more modern."

Blass: "Well, Ravel hasn't been dead all that many years, you know."

Natiello: "Exactly."

Blass: "I wanted Ravel's 'Daphnis et Chloé' Suite Number 2."

Natiello: "Which is genius."

Blass: "Well, we're going to have it. As long as this obsolete thing exists that is known as a fashion show, you have to do them dramatically, babe. As long as you bother with these big models and all the hair and all the buildup, you really have to do something. So that's what we do. In fact, this year we're doing something really spectacular with our backdrop."

Natiello: "Don't say it! Someone else will do it!"

Blass: "My *God*, Craig, you're so paranoid. Of course we know we get imitated. I think it's a form of flattery, don't you? Have you looked at the clothes? I'm all done. Of *course* I'm already done. I think there are some good things in this collection, don't you? There are some good jackets, and some dresses that are very soigné. We're using hats in the show, because I think hats are very amusing now. Oh, I'm too old for any of this anyway, don't you think? I am. I'm too old."

•

MANOLO had a jungle period, during which he lived in Venezuela, and, before that, a restaurant period, during which he and a partner ran a private dining room, on Avenue B, and, before that, a hat period, during which he made every form and object he could think of into something that could sit on your head. Currently, he is in his clothing period. This afternoon, he is making fabric by blow-drying sheets of plastic. He will use the results in his spring collection, which he says is an ode to light. Manolo's last collection was an ode to the Brooklyn Bridge, and it featured wool-gabardine suits with laminated necklines resembling suspension cables, and leather pumps with Brooklyn Bridge-arched heels. The ode to light will include the see-through fabric he is in the process of inventing. Manolo himself is an ode to several things, including facial hair, which he has shaved into interesting curlicues and squiggles on his chin and cheeks, and rubberized denim, which he is wearing from the waist down. He is brandishing an industrial heat blower, and is surrounded by some of his partner's sculptures, which look as though they could have been carried into battle by a Roman foot soldier. On a worktable in front of him is a piece of thin clear-plastic wrap the size of a bedsheet. Neon-green string has been strewn in a random loopy pattern across the sheet, and then another sheet of plastic has been laid on top: a plastic-and-string sandwich.

Manolo surveys the table and then says, "Time to cook some fabric!" He flips the switch on the gun-shaped heat blower. "I'm running very behind in getting the collection ready, but I'm not very nervous, because I have a vision. I'm really *into* the process. I'm thinking in terms of the process saying what I want it to say." He starts blowing hot air on one corner of the sandwich. The smell of melted plastic drifts up from the table. The plastic sheets bubble up and then shrivel. Manolo strokes them and then pats them down. "I'm going to make trenchcoats out of this," he says. "I'm going to show the coats over bathing suits. For when you're on the beach and it's raining." He melts and strokes another section of the sandwich, and steps back and looks at it. "It's kind of *tacky*, actually. It reminds me of a rain bonnet like those Avon ladies used to wear."

His assistant Jeannine Diego, who is patting down another corner, says, "Sort of like Handi Wipes."

Manolo says, "Oh, ye-e-es. Like Handi Wipes." He waves the heat blower over another corner. Then he swings it back to a section he has already melted. The shrivelled plastic now shrinks and heaves, and the string pops out through the top layer. Manolo turns off the gun and examines the results. "That's a lot more interesting, actually. Jeannine, look at this." She leans over, and they both poke and pull at the section. "Now it's a shower curtain," Manolo says. "It's really good all crispy like this. It's a lot more interesting, actually. The only trouble is that you get half as much, because it shrinks so much." He melts another section. "God, I love it! It makes me think of those tacky lace tablecloths you can buy on Fourteenth Street. You could turn it into a textile!" He waves the gun over another patch and then touches the tip of it to the plastic. A gob of plastic adheres to the blower and starts to burn. Manolo looks at it and says, "This is even more interesting! What do we have here?" The gob smokes and turns into a hard black lump on the end of the gun. "Nice," Manolo says admiringly. "But it's not clothes." ♦

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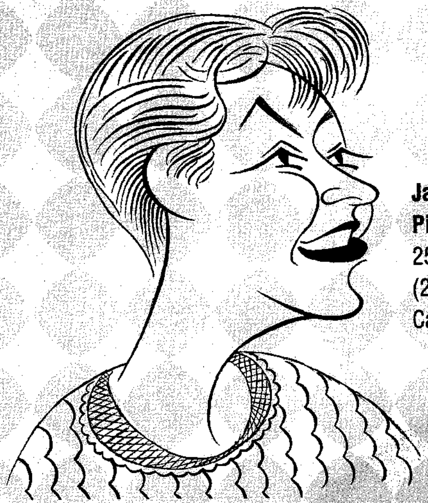

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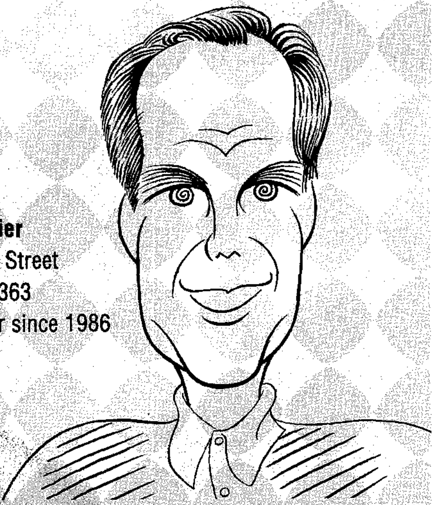

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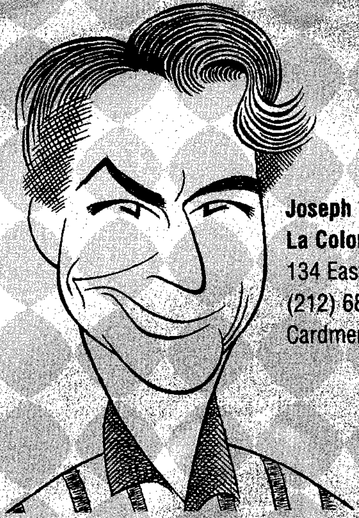

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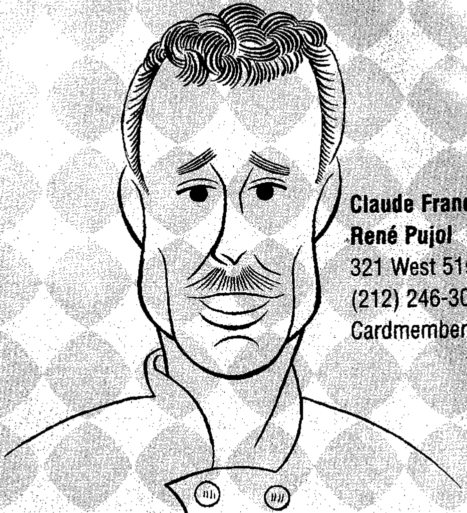

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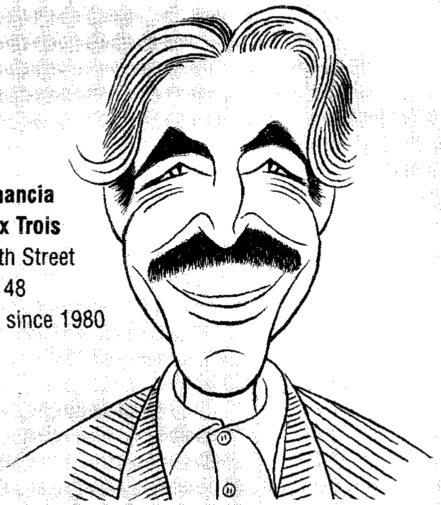

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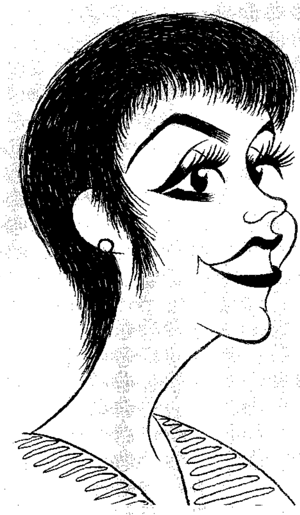

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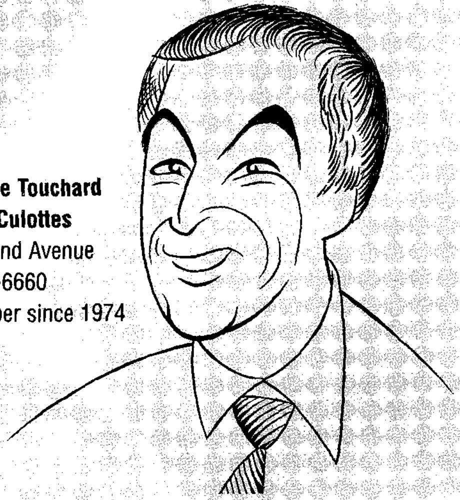

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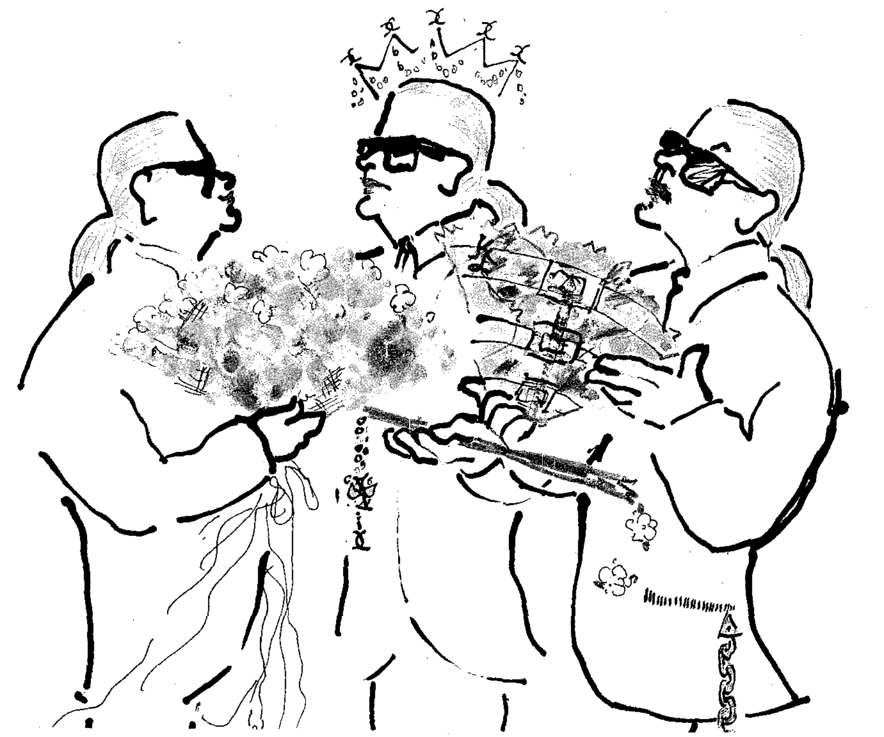
BACKSTAGE PARIS

THE LAST EMPEROR

As the head of three houses, including Chanel, Karl Lagerfeld is the most powerful designer in the world—and probably the only one to read Ovid.

BY ANTHONY LANE

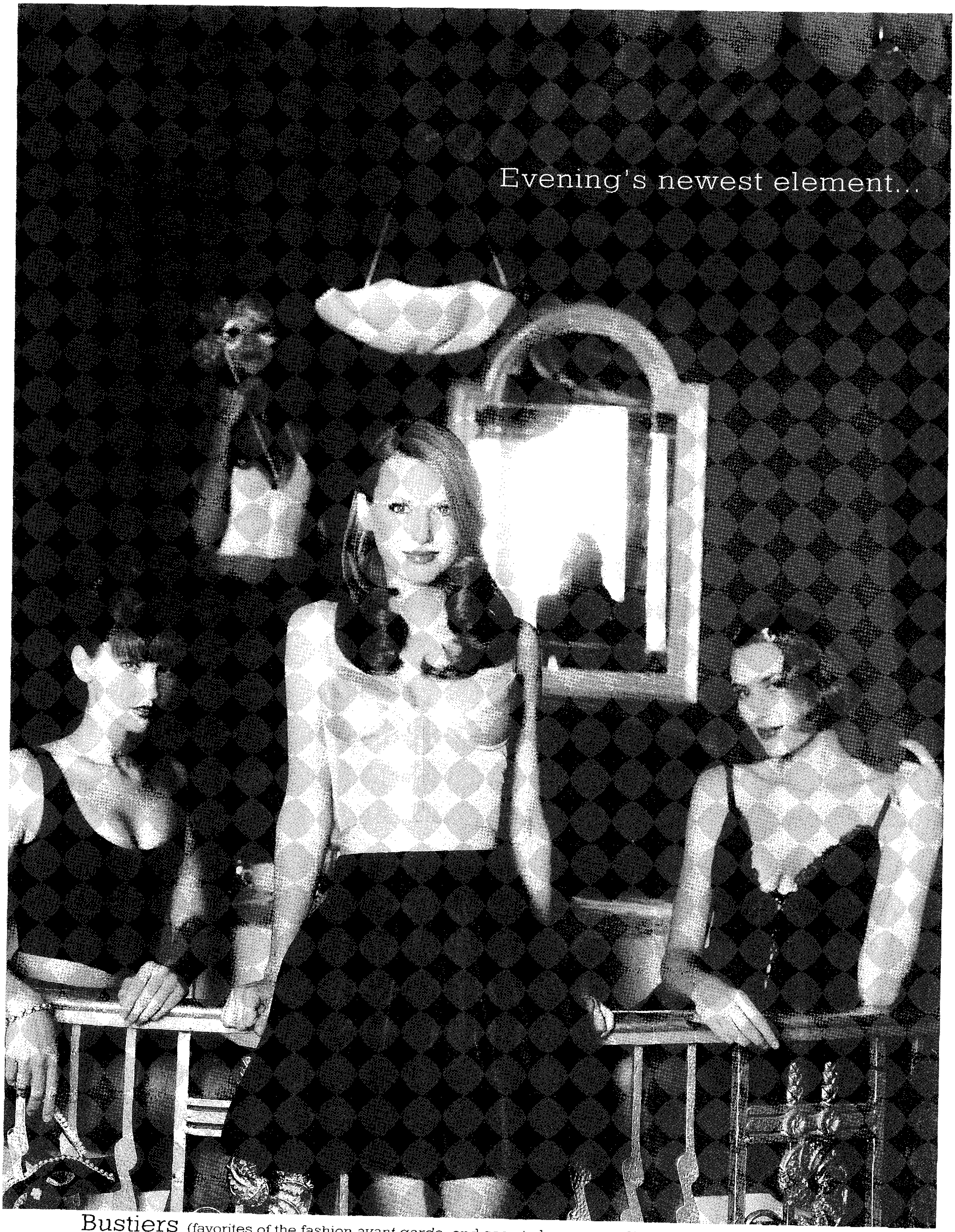
"NAOMI! Trish! Helena! Brandi! Claudia!" Pause. "Trish? Treeesh!" It is Thursday, October 13th. We are at the hub of Paris, underneath the Louvre, and the speaker is a young man named Arnaud. He is not, as you might think, sobbing out the lost loves of yesteryear but calling a bunch of girls into line before sending them out onto the runway. Trish arrives. She's cool. Brandi, however, does not. She is in full view, less than six yards away, but she is not *here,* where she ought to be. "Can someone please help me with these shoes?" she asks. Five helpers pounce on her simultaneously, which is no help at all. The helpers work at unbuckling the shoes, which aren't really shoes—more like Barbarella boots, banded by transparent straps right up to the knee. "Relax, or you're never going to get it off," Brandi says. This is good advice, and roundly ignored. Arnaud calls her name again, this time in the tone you might adopt if your only child had just slipped your grasp and fallen into a ravine. The boot comes off, and for some reason doesn't take Brandi's leg with it. She puts on the next pair of shoes. These have to be buckled *up.* "It's not important," Arnaud says. But everything is important: the helpers are determined to finish the job, so, as Brandi strolls toward her place in the line, they trot behind her in a running crouch, bent almost double, fussing at her heels. When she stops, they all cannon into her, like a train hitting the buffers. The panic level is rising, but Brandi is unmoved. She can cope with this. She's seen it all before. She's sixteen.



Most designers go to Paris to put on a good show. Lagerfeld puts on three.

GLADYS PERINT PALMER

Brandi is the second-calmest person on the premises. The calmest person is a man in a baggy black suit and sunglasses, standing at the side of the queue. He will not be joining the girls on the catwalk, not just yet; like other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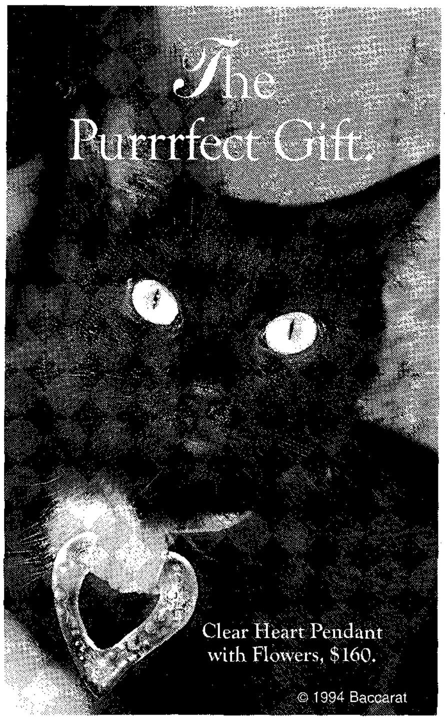
designers, Karl Lagerfeld appears only at the finale. For the moment, he is busy talking to the girls, adding last-minute details, finding time to try new earrings on Kristen McMenamy—someone hands him a pair that don't match—and to fiddle with a neckband at Trish's throat. It sounds crazy, but, guess what, this guy is *enjoying* himself. There are many things to do at the Paris prêt-à-porter collections (shop, strut, smoke, drink, shout, smile, and shop again), and many things not to do (eat, sleep, save, think, read, or wrap up warm); but the idea that you could simply have a nice day never arises. Lagerfeld, however, spends most of his time obeying the old Noël Coward principle: Work is more fun than fun. He creates the clothes, he dreams up the joke handbags, he photographs the girls, he even writes rhyming couplets for the press release. Other designers come to Paris to put on a good show, but not Karl; he puts on three good shows. "I cannot be one," he announces with mystical defiance. On Tuesday, it was Chloé; today is Lagerfeld, his own label; and still to come, next Monday, is Chanel. Even by his standards, it's kind of a busy week.

Lagerfeld grew up in Germany, the only son of a German mother and a Swedish father; that, at least, is the official version of his provenance. To understand the man more fully, you need to go further back; after a week in his company, I became convinced that someone in the Lagerfeld line had married into a family of sharks. Basking sharks, probably, for Lagerfeld is not notably voracious; he just won't stop moving. If he did stop, he would sink and die. A friend of twenty years, Patrick Hourcade, calls him "a force of will," which is great for Lagerfeld, and exhausting for the rest of us. He designs seventeen collections a year, migrates between five homes, and is said to rise before six. Never having been awake at such an hour, I can't say what that's like, but it sounds pretty damn early. Only once did I see him tired, just before midnight on Wednesday, when he took off his shades and rubbed his eyes. We were sitting in the Lagerfeld offices, waiting for Kate Moss to arrive for a fitting. For a moment, his face looked gray and fallen. The moment passed. He brightened again. Kate turned up. "I've just flown in from Arizona," she said. "On Saturday, I'm going to Japan." The music for the next day's show pumped through the room: "Life is good," went the chorus, over and over again. When I crumbled and left at one in the morning, Karl was busy writing an article for German *Vogue*.

IN Paris, the real test of stamina is not the shows themselves but the days that precede them, when Lagerfeld retreats to his three fashion houses and marshals his troops for combat. The models parade in front of him in the outfits they will wear on the catwalk. Accessories are added; hemlines are raised or, on rare occasions, lowered; Polaroid photographs are taken, pinned to a board, then bound into a precise order of battle. This requires total concentration, which makes it all the more impressive that Lagerfeld himself appears to pay no attention whatsoever. When Naomi Campbell turned up, much delayed, for a late-night fitting, he greeted her warmly, made sure that she was properly decked out in pink palazzo pants trimmed with black lace, then proceeded to tell me all about this terrific idea he had for a movie. Lagerfeld is surrounded by assistants, hangers-on, and droppers-in, some of whom interest him more than others ("People who work hate being visited by those who don't," he says), but all of whom are met with armfuls of charm and depart in the belief that *they* were the ones he really wanted to see. Only if you watch carefully do you notice his glance flicking up at each model, or a motion of his hand suggesting an alteration. Any further comment is concise: "That's vulgar," "Too 'Cage aux Folles,'" and, to some vain male posers, "No, no bedroom mood, please!" Lagerfeld has neither the time nor, I suspect, the inclination to pursue political correctness. When Stephanie Seymour, who recently gave birth to her second child, entered the room in a swimsuit, he turned to me. "Huge balloons, no?" he exclaimed. "With a cleavage like that, everything fits."

Last week's campaign began at Chloé, on the Rue Faubourg Saint-Honoré—the long, spotless street that has for decades been the Vatican of fashion, issuing all manner of earring encyclicals and heel edicts. Yards from the boutique, just over the way, are the British and American Embassies, offering the prospect of a great Parisian day: Go and have a good cry about your lost passport, then nip



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across the road and cheer yourself up by buying a velvet evening bag with little bronze feet, for $1,680. Downstairs in Chloé, I watched a young woman emerge from a changing room in a wedding dress. "It's transparent," she said. "Not *too* transparent," cried the sales assistants. Well, up to a point. From ten paces I could read the labels on her underwear. One floor above, a middle-aged woman tried on a black chiffon two-piece. "I'm too old," she said to me. "I'm going to trip, right?" There was no polite answer to this. She was confronting the terrible truth that prêt-à-porter does not mean "ready to wear"; it means "ready to wear if you have legs as long as the Eiffel Tower." I left her to her sorrows, and ascended to the inner sanctum of Karl Lagerfeld.

He sat at his desk, surrounded by the tools of his trade: the full range of Caran d'Ache crayons, a fistful of green Pentel pens, writing paper, sketching paper, and a little basket of lemons. At first, I took the lemons to be a visual pun—something to fortify his acid tongue—but it turned out that Karl likes a dose of lemon in his Diet Coke. Food is a big deal around here: surprising, really, because the models themselves subsist on the traditional party-hermit diet of water and cigarettes, boosted occasionally by sugar-free gum and a shot of champagne. The creative types, however, function on a fairly intensive snack rhythm, to keep their energy up as the night grows long. Everything needs to be eaten with one hand, leaving the other free to wave hello and goodbye. Cheese, for instance, should come in tasteless slices or wax-wrapped balls, not in interesting fungoid pools. One of Lagerfeld's best clients, Susan Gutfreund, arrived with a bag of goodies from Debauve & Gallais, which makes the kind of chocolates you dream about on your deathbed. She offered me one from a tin labelled Les Incroyables. It was unbelievable. Karl, meanwhile, made steady headway through a pile of frankfurters with a side dish of mustard. He might as well have hung a sign over his head saying "I'm still German."

Well, you do wonder. Lagerfeld speaks four languages: German, French, English, and Italian. This is five fewer than his father, a condensed-milk millionaire with a particular penchant for Russian, but Lagerfeld can still unnerve you, because he often appears to be speaking all four at the same time, roaming across the linguistic map within the course of a single exchange. As a boy, he says, he taught himself to read in order to follow the text of a favorite picture book. "Which book?" I asked him, trying hard to imagine the young Karl poring over Richard Scarry. He replied, " 'Das Nibelungenlied.' " There is more than a dash of Nabokov in Lagerfeld: the classy solitude of his upbringing, the mental speed that is easily taken for arrogance, the restive obsession with detail that is bred by unending exile. "Where is home?" I asked him. "Wherever I am," he replied. He wrote the *Vogue* article with a French-German dictionary at his elbow, as if the finer points of his native language had grown blunt from lack of practice; but he certainly rattled it off with brio when talking to Claudia Schiffer. "Nobody else understands us," he said gleefully. I guess she loosens the tongue.

Claudia is, by all reports, the most wanted woman in the world. She stood in the middle of the room wearing a garment whose style could best be described as cling peach. Karl summed up its appeal: "How to look naked in a long dress." I asked Claudia if she had come straight to Paris from the Milan shows. "No, I went to Frankfurt, to the Book Fair. I was launching two books," she said. Was one of them, by any chance, a novel? "No, it's too early for that," she replied, which may or may not have been a dig at Naomi Campbell, whose own foray into fiction, "The Swan," was published recently. And that was as sharp as Claudia ever got. Anyone who came to Paris hoping to find outrageous acts of bitchery among the stars—as recorded, or invented, by the tabloid press—would be badly disappointed; there is nothing backstage at a week of fashion shows to touch the meanness of spirit that you would have found at, say, a single soirée of the Bloomsbury Group. Not among the designers, at any rate, who are working flat out; or among the models, most of whom keep long hours (hair and makeup at six in the morning, two or three shows, a shoot, maybe a final fitting toward eleven at night) while maintaining a commendably even temper. True, one of them said that

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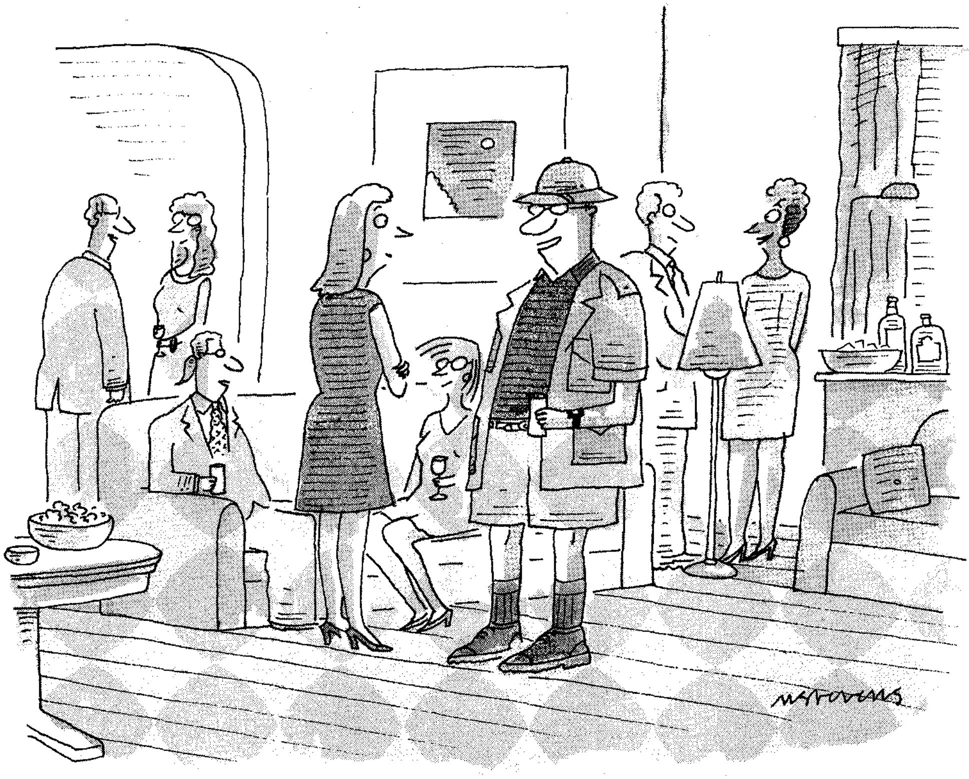


"I'm a Banana Republican."

• •

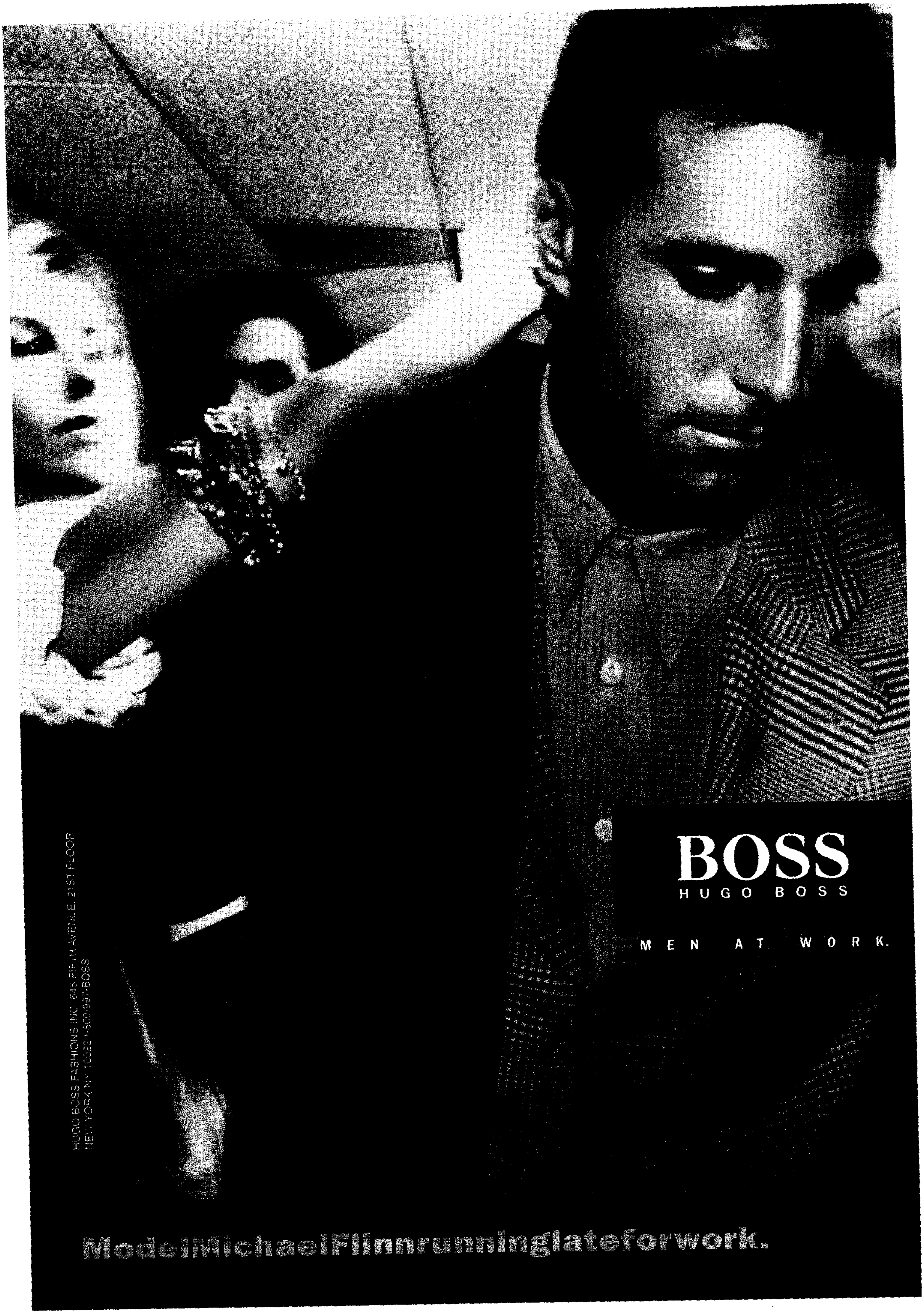
Brandi should be given a good slap, but that's just motherly advice. I watched Brandi playing air guitar to the soundtrack of "Pulp Fiction" and thought she could probably ride a slap as well as any other teen-ager. On the runway, she sashays with such a violent swing of the hips that I was worried she might swing too far and start walking backward.

The problem with fashion is not spoiled supermodels but supermodels' boyfriends. It is at this juncture that the whole business goes haywire. Watching Linda Evangelista as she chatted with Kyle MacLachlan in a foaming ring of camera crews (possibly the least spontaneous conversation in the history of human contact), or wandering backstage after a show and finding Karl in conversation with Claudia, David Copperfield, and David Copperfield's *father*, I thought: Is it worth it? Lagerfeld loves designing clothes, but can he really take the cloud of unknowing, the nimbus of bullshit, that surrounds it all? In the course of one evening, he talked about the novels of Maurice Barrès (author of "Le Culte du Moi"), early Kokoschka, Bresson's "Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne," and the likelihood that the gardens of Versailles had been laid out with Ovid's "Metamorphoses" in mind. Still pondering this, I turned up at the show next day and watched the photographers swarming around the B-list celebs. Up went the cry *"Voilà Lennee Kraveetz!"* In front of me, a guy turned to his neighbor. "We had this genius time shopping," he told her. How do you get from Ovid to Lenny Kravitz? What links the distant boroughs of interest inside Karl Lagerfeld's brain? The answer, of course, is clothes.

ANYONE who complains that high fashion offers nothing to the low tastes (and lower funds) of ordinary people is quite correct. But the grievance misses the point. A fashion show is not a practical guide; you are not supposed to wear that multicolored stretch dress in nylon, cotton, and Lycra, or even to want to wear it. And if you did buy it could you ease it on like a five-foot condom, as Kristen McMenamy does? What would happen if your dog started pulling from the other end? Be honest: a show is more like an exhibition of paintings, to be gazed at in respectful awe. The big fashion houses make heaps of money, mostly through perfume and accessories, but, unlike the film world, they never directly touch a broader public. "I don't buy. You don't buy. I propose," Karl said to me. One afternoon, I went to the Hôtel George V and watched the collections being bought by the stores. The buyer for Bergdorf Goodman said she loved the plain black jersey dress. I asked her how many she would order. Hundreds? She laughed. How many, then? "I can't tell you that," she said. Fifteen? Twenty? "Maybe." (I sneaked a look at the Lagerfeld price list. A black jersey outfit would be purchased by the stores at $995 and sold to the client for $2,290. Nice work if you can get it.)

After the final show, I asked Patrick Hourcade to describe the three collections that Karl had unveiled in Paris. Chloé? *"Poétique."* Lagerfeld? *"Laboratoire."* Chanel? *"Opportuniste."* Pretty shrewd, I thought: put the three together, and you get a rounded view of his old friend Karl. Chloé was fluid, mock-pastoral, full of lemon, lilac, and grass green; some girls promenaded in print skirts fanned out by an undercarriage of stiff tulle. They ended the show in an impossible shimmer, lace laid over cotton and beaded with sequins, an effect that you can easily create in your own home: just run a rainbow through your sewing machine. Two days later, the Lagerfeld show slapped you awake. It was like being mugged by a bunch of fuchsias. The lines had hardened since Chloé; some hats were no more than ovals of clear, crownless plastic; the jackets had a slight upward tilt at the shoulders, as if Lagerfeld had taken sartorial advice from George Raft. The girls marched down the runway to a dance remix of "Hello, Dolly!" and "Hawaii Five-0." Afterward, I asked Karl to sum up the look. "Femininity, mystique, glamour," he began. I braced myself for philosophy. "Let's not talk about those words," he said. "Let's talk about *impeccable grooming*."

Finally, there is Chanel. They order *these things differently at Chanel.* There is a list of backstage visitors at the barrier; if you do not appear on it, there is nothing you can do except go away and come back ten minutes later in a state of intense fame. Even that may not be enough; rumors that Madonna would be attending proved unfounded, but it may be that she turned up, saw that she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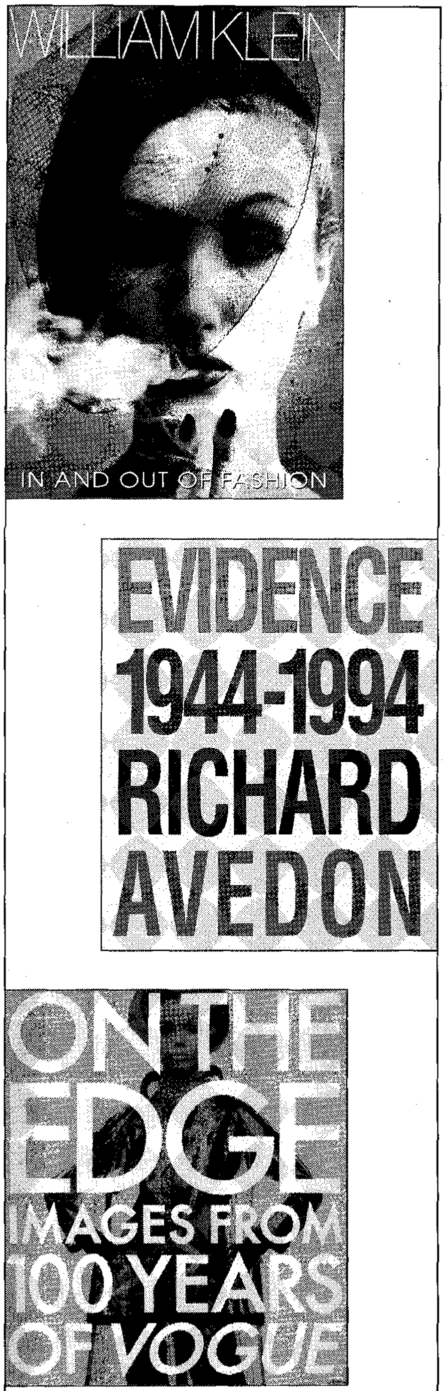

The craft behind
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Introduction by Kennedy Fraser

RANDOM HOUSE

had slipped off the list, and spent the show sitting in the ladies' room crying quietly into a Kleenex. My name *was* on the list, and, trying to quell the sensation that I had become part of a giant video game ("Robecop—Can You Smash Through the Chanel Tunnel and Grab the Mighty Schiffer?"), I proceeded to the backstage entrance and was handed a form to sign. It said: "I undertake: 1) Not to take picture or film Claudia Schiffer during her makeup. 2) Not to take picture or film models in the nude." This was fashion's answer to the McCarthy hearings: "Are you now, or have you ever been, a member of the Staring Party?" Sheepishly, I signed on the line, strengthened only by the knowledge that I had already committed a daringly double crime by remaining backstage during the Lagerfeld show, where an entirely nude Claudia was part of the scenery.

The truth is that a fashion show is the least sexy environment in the civilized world, nowhere near as arousing as, say, a bookstore. Even out on the catwalk, there is no languor, no subtlety of suggestion; the only desire is to change clothes as fast as possible in a given period, as in a Christmas party game. (I had clocked the Lagerfeld show at thirty-one minutes and thirty seconds; within that time the audience saw two hundred and twenty-six separate outfits, which works out at a new look roughly every eight and a half seconds.) The atmosphere and the lighting remind you of a boxing match, but the sheer delight in surfeit—more than the eye can absorb at any one moment—is closer to the mood at a fireworks display. Everybody had fun at Chanel. We clapped a lot, and even wolf-whistled. We had a genius time. The models wore loud little tweed suits in pink and baby blue; the skirts were unzipped up the front to expose glittering G-strings. ("Not too porno for you?" Lagerfeld had asked his older assistants at the studio.) The jewelry, as in the other shows, appeared to be molded from candy. Marxist dialectic would dismiss all this as commodity fetishism, but the trouble with Karl Marx is that, through no fault of his own, he never saw Helena Christensen wearing a flame-colored, rhinestone-studded bikini thong.

It is commonly and breathlessly said that a Lagerfeld show is full of "ideas," but this is just the vanity of the fashion pack, who like to cry up the intellectual verve of their calling. Lagerfeld is a great designer precisely because he doesn't have ideas, because he refuses to share the eternal French appetite for conceptual order: he has whims, habits, and minor inspirations. He plays jokes. ("My small talk is low and dirty," he says, "but my morality is clean.") He puts a girl in a pure-white wasp-waisted dress, with straps that cross at the throat, then blows the purity by lacing her midriff into a corset of shiny scarlet leather. It's the classic modern tactic of playing off high against low, soft against tough, and it didn't need to be thought through; Lagerfeld just did it. He got an anguished letter the next day from Suzy Menkes, the fashion critic of the *International Herald Tribune*, complaining that he was producing fashion without roots; but fashion is not like poetry—it doesn't need roots. If you don't like them, you can chop them off. This was the lesson of the Chanel show, with its forties beachwear and its snowstorm of logos: parody will get you everywhere.

Karl Lagerfeld is lord of all he surveys; you suspect that he could give up his crown at a moment's notice, and you know that he never will. There is nothing wrong with the emperor's clothes; it is his subjects who are bare and don't know it. The fashion world is more rabid and self-involved than any other, because, in the end, none of it matters. At its core is an aesthetic high, spun around a delicate manual skill; for some people that is quite enough, but for Lagerfeld it offers dangerously easy pickings. After a week, I began to sense that somewhere, wrapped up inside his generosity and eagerness, is a tiny sliver of boredom. It is not inertia; it is the boredom of Wilde and Huysmans, the boredom of the man who is cleverer than the people around him, who has to keep his mind fresh with a flux of ever more startling sensations, and who knows that what he does with his life is at once thrilling and void. (Lagerfeld himself would deny this fiercely.) One evening at Chloé, he and I looked at a model in a thin silk pants suit—pajamas, almost—covered with falling leaves. "You can see through it from the sides but not from the front," he said. Sounds like fashion to me. ♦

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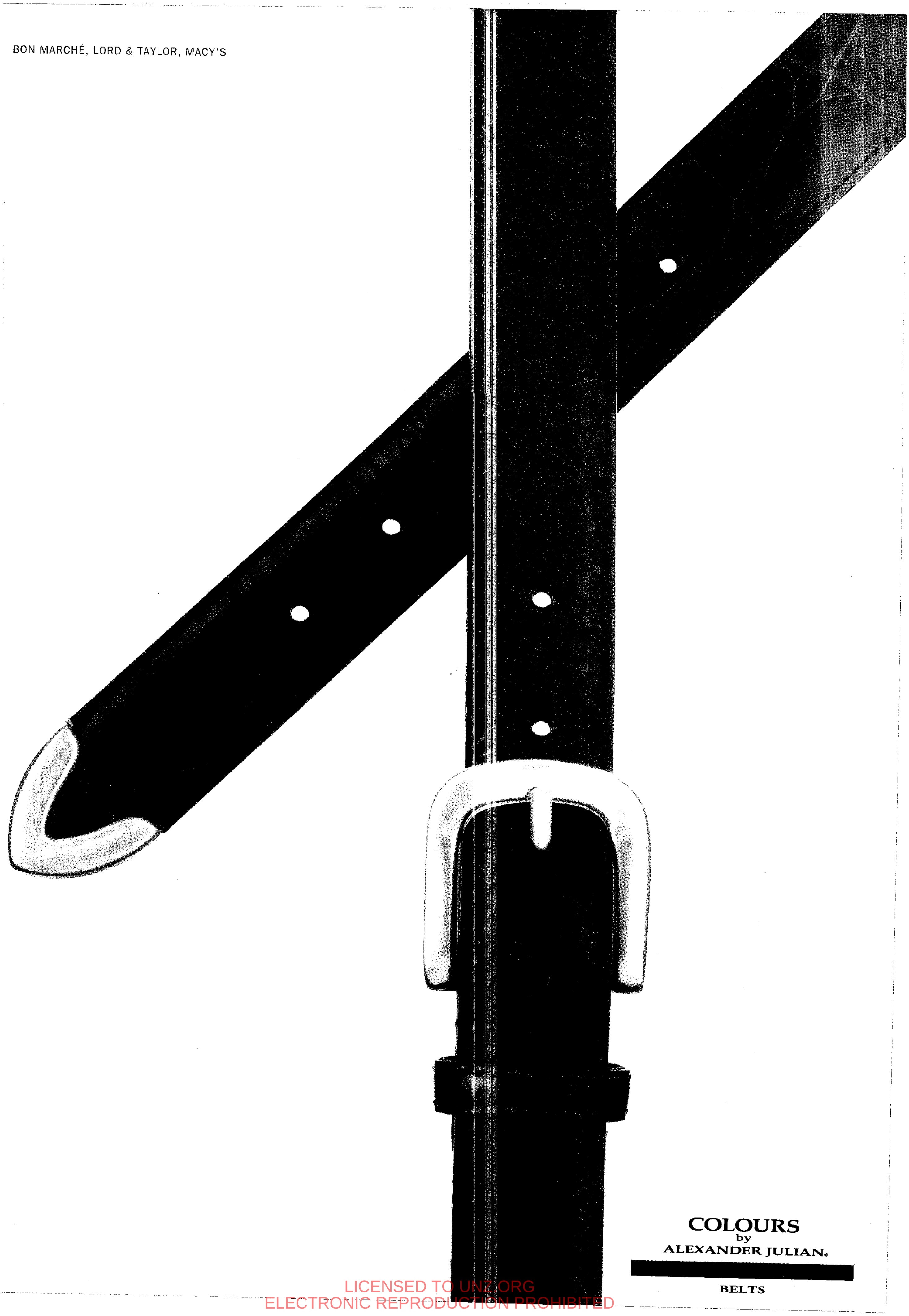

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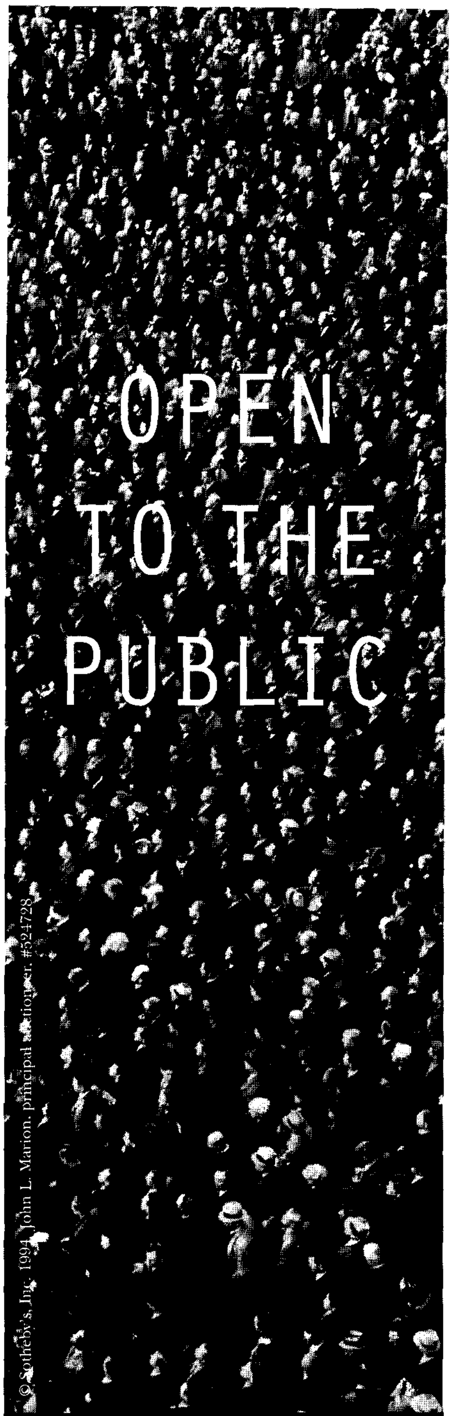
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ANNALS OF HABERDASHERY

THE SUIT DOCTOR

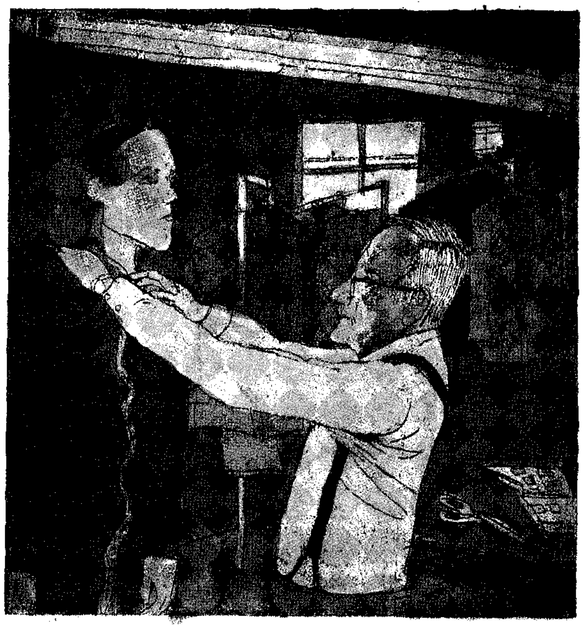
You think you might have a problem with the way you dress? There's one way to find out. Go see Martin Greenfield, the man who knows suits.

BY CHARLES McGRATH

LET me explain something to you. Martin Greenfield, the tailors' tailor, doesn't need your business. Martin Greenfield dresses the President, he dresses Paul Newman, he dresses Conan O'Brien, he dresses Arnold Schwarzenegger. He dresses C.E.O.s. He does this as a *favor*. You he doesn't need. You want Greenfield, go to Neiman's, go to Donna Karan, go to Brooks Brothers, even. The top-of-the-line suits there—the Brooks Brothers Golden Fleece collection, the Neiman Marcus collection, Donna's Couture suits for men—are all manufactured by Martin Greenfield, in a hundred-year-old factory building in Brooklyn. On your own, you could never find this place. Never. So why make things difficult for yourself? Go over to Brooks, fourth floor. There's a beautiful charcoal-gray suit—a hundred-per-cent Super 100 wool. It's *you*. Look at this—traditional three-button styling, but with a difference. Look at the way this button stands up. That's a genuine horn button, hand-sewn. You know what horn buttons cost? Let me put it this way: these buttons alone add about six dollars to the cost of the garment. Just slip on the jacket. Not too shabby, huh? It's so light you could be wearing nothing at all. This suit fits your life style, and today life style is everything. Today, it's life style, life style, life style.

All right, just for the sake of argument, let's say you know somebody who could get you in to see Martin Greenfield. Your boss, maybe. Where do you think your boss gets those sleek double-breasted jobs he's always wearing—the ones that give him that corporate Al Capone look? You think he finds those at Syms?

You'll have to take yourself to Brooklyn. I'm not even going to get into that, it's so complicated. But what are you going to *wear* when you see Martin Greenfield? It's up to you, but my vote is for the two-button in the nailhead weave—the one you bought off the rack last year from a Madison Avenue clothier who shall remain nameless. The suit your wife calls the Mistake. But never mind. This is the only garment you own that isn't fused. Take it from me, you do not want Martin Greenfield to see you in a garment whose inner and outer layers have been glued together.


Greenfield studies a buttonhole for a second, then shakes his head and says "Machine."

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

O.K., you're buttoned into the nailhead. You got a tie on? The one from Barney's? Fine. So now you're sitting in Martin Greenfield's office, on the third floor of the hundred-year-old factory building, and, admit it, the place looks like—well, not a dump, exactly, but the kind of office where salesmen in a David Mamet play might work. Let me explain

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something to you. Martin Greenfield could afford a fancy carpet. He could afford Italian office furniture. But that's not his style. He doesn't want to impress you with his office. He'll impress you with the *garment.* And what about Mr. Greenfield himself? He looks like a million bucks, doesn't he? He's a perfect 42 regular. Silver hair, wire-rimmed glasses, snowy-white shirt nicely accessorized with a blue-and-white Italian silk tie and heavy gold cufflinks. You were expecting, maybe, some little guy in an undershirt, with pins in his mouth?

Martin Greenfield looks more like a doctor than a tailor, and a doctor is what his father, back in Czechoslovakia, hoped he would be. When Martin came to this country—he still remembers the day he arrived here, it was September 18, 1947, and he was seventeen—he considered going to medical school but concluded that it would take him until he was about fifty years old. So he decided to become a suit doctor instead. He had learned about tailoring in the concentration camps, of all places. Even in the camps, he likes to say, if your stripes looked good, everybody thought you must know someone, and you got treated better. And, according to Greenfield, it's the same way today—that's what clothing is all about. Let's say Martin Greenfield has come to see someone in the hospital and visiting hours are over—no one's going to stop him. Why? Because he looks too good. He's not saying this to brag; he's just pointing out the value of quality. Quality is everything. There is no substitute.

Let me prepare you for something. As Martin Greenfield tells you all this, speaking in Brooklynese lightly accessorized with Czech inflections, you're going to be charmed. You're probably going to be a little bit spellbound. Don't worry about it. Enjoy! Martin Greenfield is a natural communicator, as he likes to say, and he's also one of those people who genuinely command both respect and affection. If you commanded the kind of respect and affection that he commands, *you would be able to afford* garments that are not fused. But don't underestimate Martin Greenfield. In a little while, after you leave, he's going to take a phone call from someone who works at one of the stores he deals with. A mixup over an order. Greenfield will be his customary self—polite yet firm—

and he'll have the problem straightened out in no time. But when he hangs up he's going to sigh, and say, "This person is not a professional," in a tone that, believe me, you would hate to have applied to yourself.

The moment of truth. Martin Greenfield looks you over and says, "Nice suit."

You blush. "It's not custom-made, or anything," you point out.

"It's nice," he repeats. "It's not a fused garment. See, it drapes—it lays on you. It has a personality. That nailhead will not go out of fashion in a hundred and fifty years. Every man should have a suit like this in his wardrobe."

"Yeah, but tell me what's wrong with it," you beg. "There's got to be something wrong."

He shakes his head. "I don't like to criticize." You persist, though, and in a few moments he has you in front of a full-length mirror, and his hands are fluttering in that nervous, tailorlike way as he tweaks at your lapels, trying to get the jacket to rest more gracefully on your frame. He studies a buttonhole for a second, then shakes his head and says "Machine." He picks up the skirt of your jacket, turns it over, and examines the way the lining is sewn in. "Machine," he says again. On a good suit, he explains, the buttonholes, the lining, the lapels, and a lot of things you can't even see are sewn by hand. Then he stands behind you and runs his hands over your shoulder blades. "If you stood up straight, there would be no problem here," he says. "But everybody's different, not everybody stands the same way. If I were making a suit for you, I would add a little more material here—to allow for the roundness and make it so you do not always have to pull the jacket forward." Then he notices the front of your trousers. "No pleats," he says. "You don't see that much anymore, but you never know, it might come back."

Come on, don't feel so bad. Here's someone you can relate to: Martin's thirty-four-year-old son, Tod, the one who majored in theatre at Skidmore and worked for three years at BAM before deciding to give the rag trade a whirl. (Tod's older brother, Jay, went all the way through dental school—but he's never drilled a tooth. He works here, too.) Tod is wearing shorts and a T-shirt. He's dressed for the factory, where they

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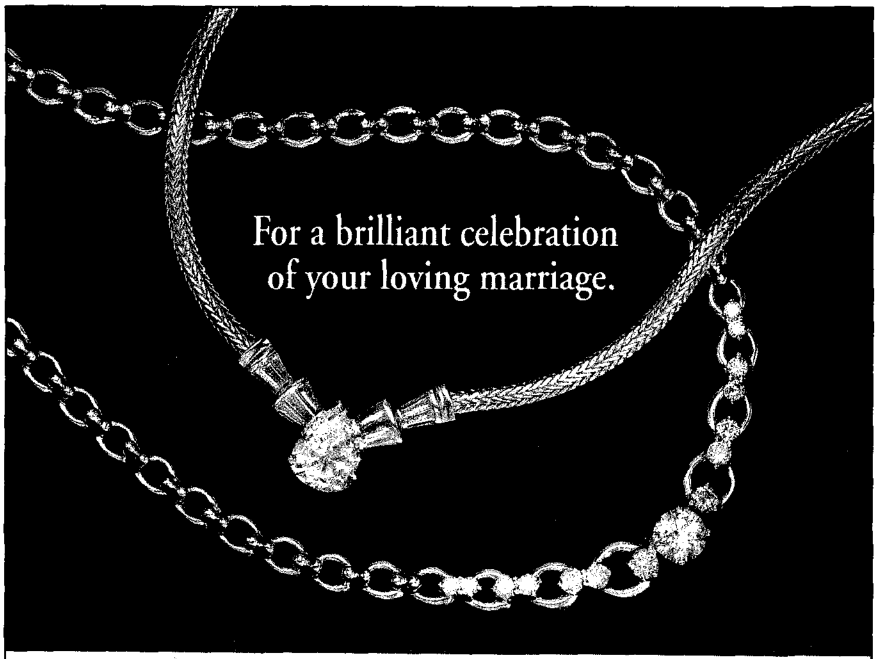

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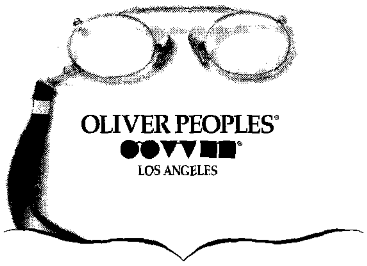

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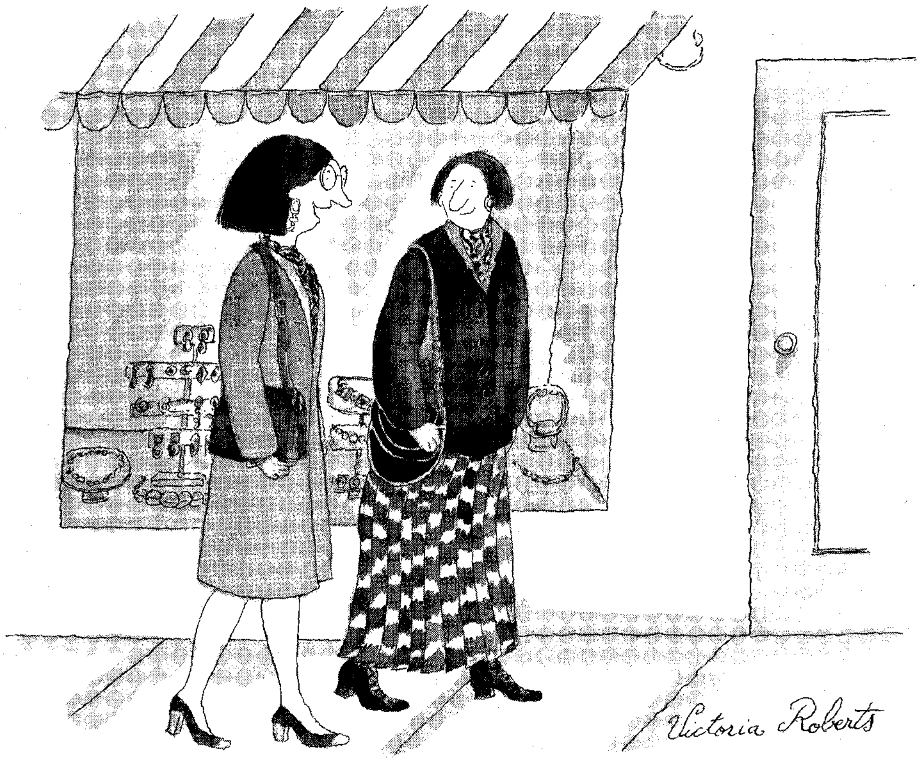


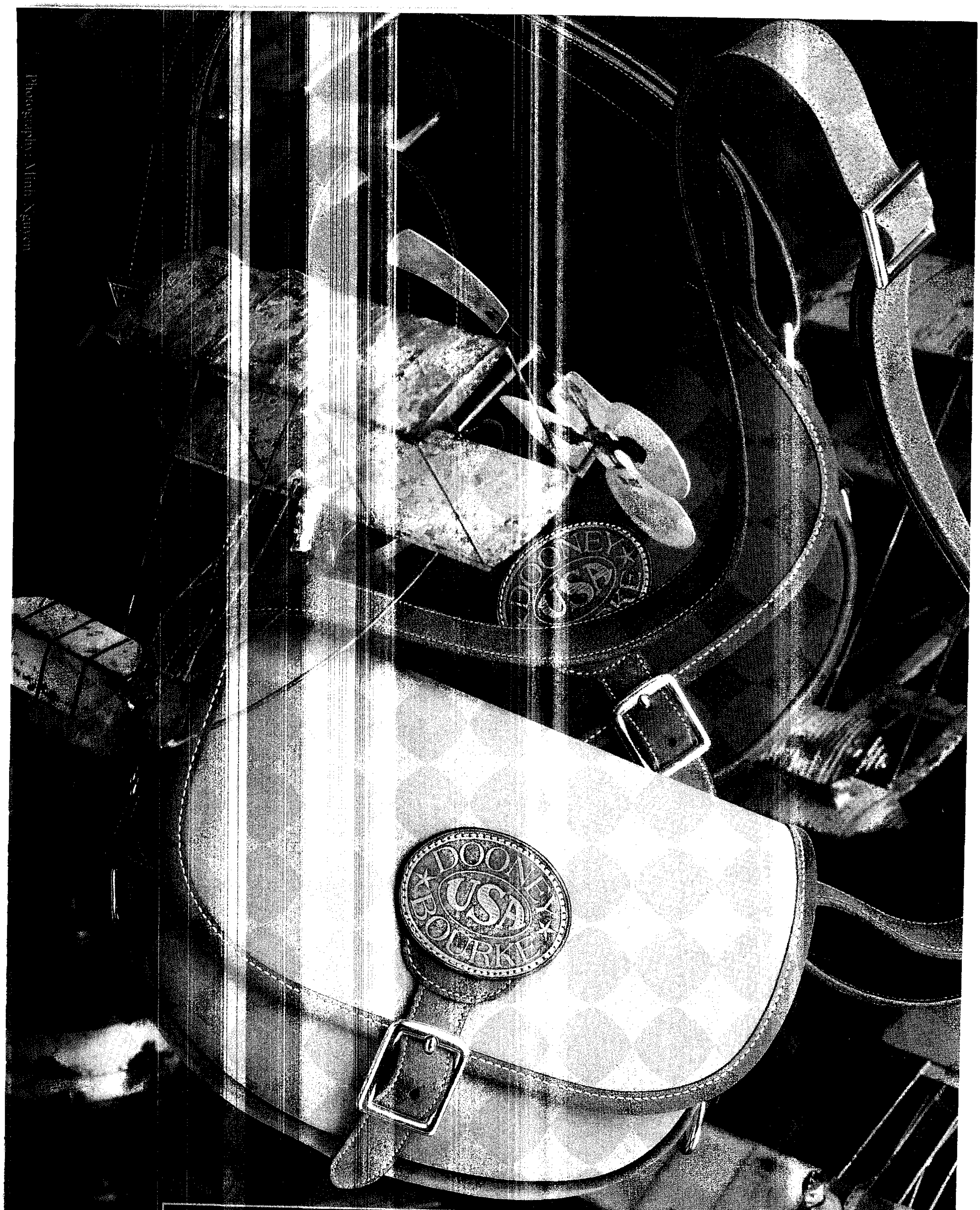
"I didn't start seriously accessorizing until my mid-thirties."

• •

aren't trying to save money on the heat. Tod's going to take you around the floor and show you how suits are made. He's going to show you everything—the cutting, the basting, the pressing, the underpressing, all the hand-sewing in places you didn't even know about. Let me tell you something. When you're done, you'll never take your suit for granted again. That's nine hours of work there. You'll be amazed that suits are so *cheap*.

O.K., now that you know a little, maybe you have some intelligent questions for Martin Greenfield. Go ahead, ask him anything. You want to ask him about the European influence in men's tailoring? What are you, a showoff? You read one issue of *GQ* and all you can think is Europe? This is what Martin Greenfield will tell you: "One thing I know about Europe is that before 1947 there was never a ready-made suit of quality. You wanted a suit, you went to a tailor. The European influence in men's fashion was the European tailors who came to work in this country. We helped them out, and the end result was that they knocked our head off. Ventless clothing—that's supposed to be European. Let me tell you something. Ready-made ventless clothing was created in this country during the war. Vents, pleats, cuffs—all that was not allowed, and it was done with cloth-saving in mind, because there was not enough material. There was nothing in Europe, stylewise, that was different from what was created in the United States. It puzzles me that people in this business don't know what I'm telling you. Why don't you go to the library? It's all out there, but people don't want to learn. I'll tell you something else. Everything that is new in fashion is brought back from the past. Clothing just goes round and round. Broad shoulders, narrow shoulders. Tapered waist, untapered waist. Now we've got Friday wear, this wear, that wear, but this is not new to me. I've seen it when it was *all* leisurewear. But why is the guy who designs ties always wearing a T-shirt? That's asinine. You want to sell *clothes*."

Any more questions? Good, because Martin Greenfield has to go talk to the president of Saks now. His Caddy's waiting. But, please! Button your suit jacket. And your shoes! Do me a favor. When you go home, stand in front of the mirror and tell yourself the truth. You really think brown goes with gray? ♦



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FASHION STATEMENTS

THE ONLY ONE

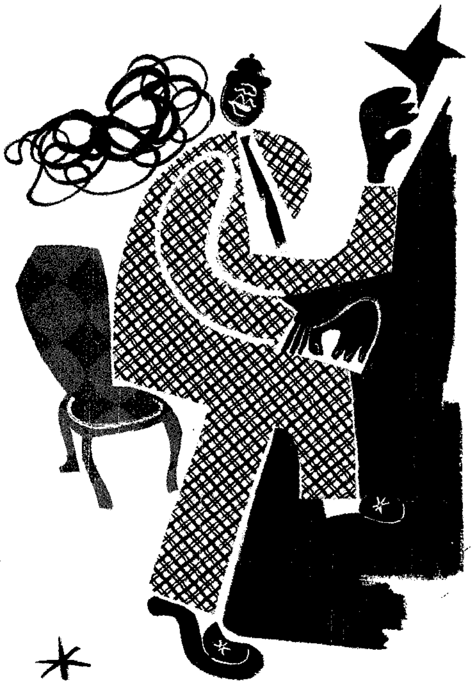
André Leon Talley is Vogue's creative director, but as one of the few blacks in a top position in fashion, he is held in both awe and mistrust.

BY HILTON ALS

ONE night last spring, the fashion editor André Leon Talley attended an all-male nude revue at the Gaiety Theatre, on West Forty-sixth Street. He was dressed in a red waist-length military jacket with gold epaulets and black cuffs, black military trousers with a gold stripe down each leg, black patent-leather pumps with grosgrain bows, gray silk socks with black ribbing, white gloves, and a faux-fur muff. Accompanying him, rather like another accessory, was the young English designer John Galliano.

As the driver opened the car door in front of the theatre, Talley, characteristically, issued a directive followed by a question: "I shall expect you here upon my return at once! Lord, child, how am I gonna get out of this car in all this drag?" He did not pause for an answer. He stretched out his long left leg, placed his foot on the sidewalk, and, grabbing the back of the driver's seat, hoisted himself up and out—a maneuver whose inelegance he countered by adjusting his muff with a flourish.

Appearances are significant to André Leon Talley, who seeks always to live up to the grand amalgamation of his three names. He has sienna-brown skin and slightly graying close-cropped hair. He is six feet seven and has large hands and large feet and a barrel chest. He has been described as "a big girl." He is gap-toothed and full-mouthed. His speech combines an old-school Negro syntax, French words (for sardonic emphasis), and a posh British accent. Though a wide audience may know him from his periodic television appearances on CNN and VH1, it is in the world of magazines that he has made his name. Currently the creative director of *Vogue*, formerly the creative director of *HG* and a writer, stylist, and photographer for *Women's Wear Daily*, *Interview*, and the *Times Magazine*, André Leon Talley is, at forty-six, fashion's most voluble arbiter, custodian, and promoter of glamour.



In his isolation, Talley avoids the potential rejection and hurt that are invariable aspects of romantic love.

Inside the Gaiety—a small, dark space with a stage, a movie screen, and two tiers of seats—some men sat in various states of undress and arousal while others dozed quietly. Talley and Galliano stood in the middle of the aisle to the left of the stage and waited for the dancers to appear. Talley was hoping for a "moment." He finds moments in other people's impulses ("I can tell you were about to have a moment"), work ("What Mr. Lagerfeld and I were after in those photographs was a moment"), architecture ("This room could use a certain . . . moment"), social gatherings ("These people are having a moment"). When the dancers entered, one by one, Talley said, "This is a major moment,

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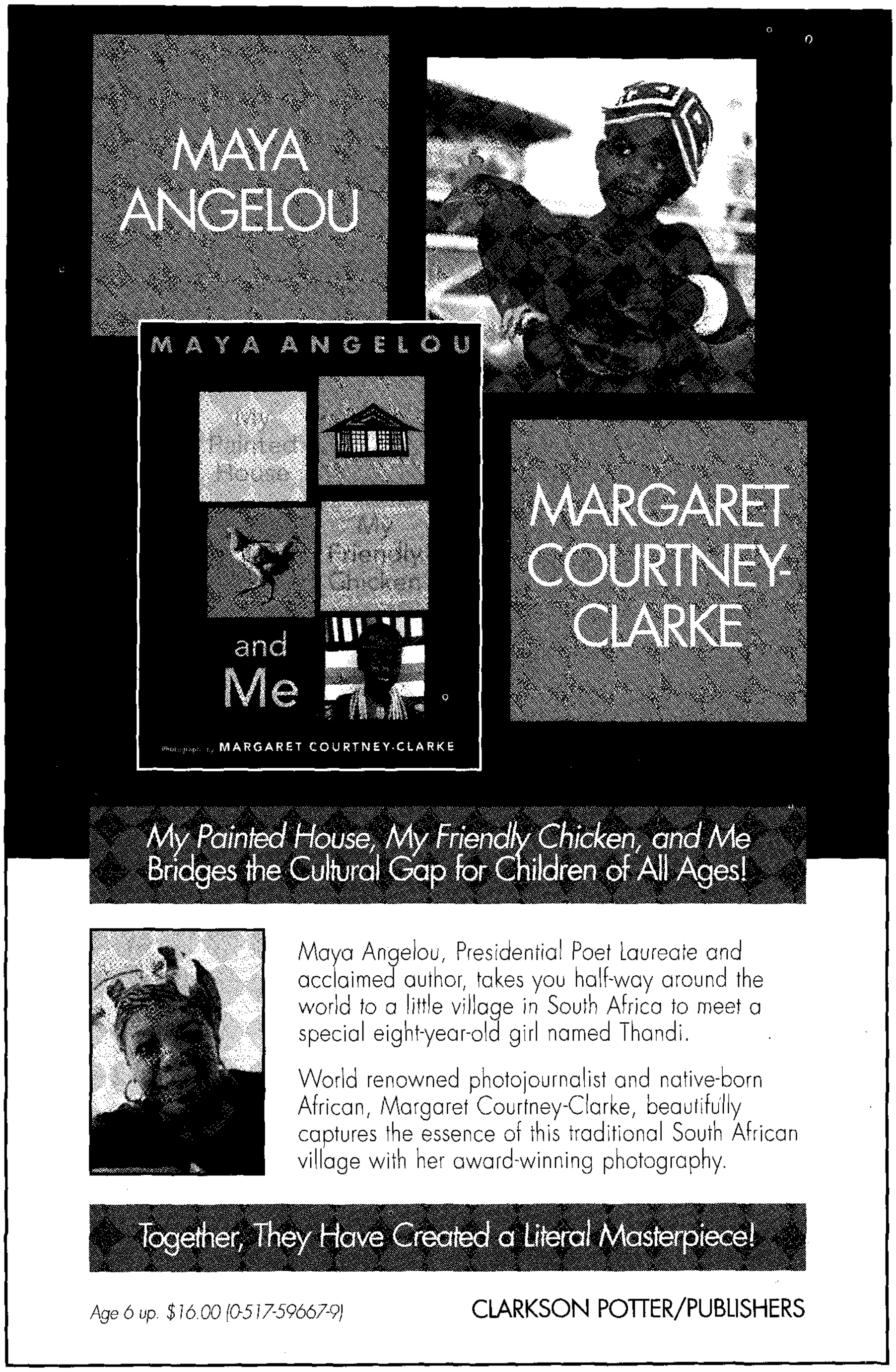
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Photographs by MARGARET COURTNEY-CLARKE

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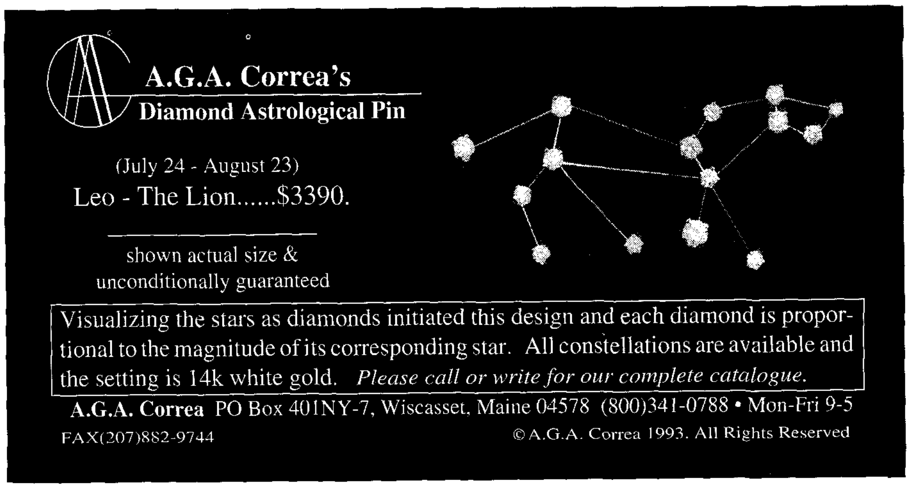
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child." Swaying to loud disco music and against a backdrop of gold lamé, the young men, who were either nude or partly so, offered the men in the front row a thigh to be touched, a biceps to be rubbed.

"Ooh!" Talley exclaimed. "It's *nostalgie de la boue!* It's 'Déjeuner sur l'Herbe,' no? Manet. The flesh. The young men. The languorous fall and gall of the flesh to dare itself to fall *on* the *herbe.*" André Leon Talley came down hard on the word *herbe* as he caught sight of a lavishly tanned young man onstage who was naked except for cowboy boots and, as his smile revealed, a retainer. "What can one do?" Talley moaned. "What can one do with such piquant insouciance? How can one live without the *vitality* of the cowboy boots and teeth and retainers and so forth?"

Before the end of the performance, Talley led Galliano into a room on one side of the theatre, where several other men were waiting for the dancers. Upon identifying André Leon Talley as "that fashion man off the TV," a black drag queen, who wore jeans, a cream-colored halter top, and an upswept hairdo, and sat on the lap of a bespectacled older white man, said, "That's what I want you to make me feel like, baby, a white woman. A white woman who's getting out of your Mercedes-Benz and going into Gucci to buy me some new drawers because you wrecked them. Just fabulous."

"This is charming," Talley said, calling attention to a makeshift bar with bowls of pretzels and potato chips and fruit punch. "For the guests who have come to pay homage to the breathtaking ability of the personnel." His muff grazed the top of the potato chips.

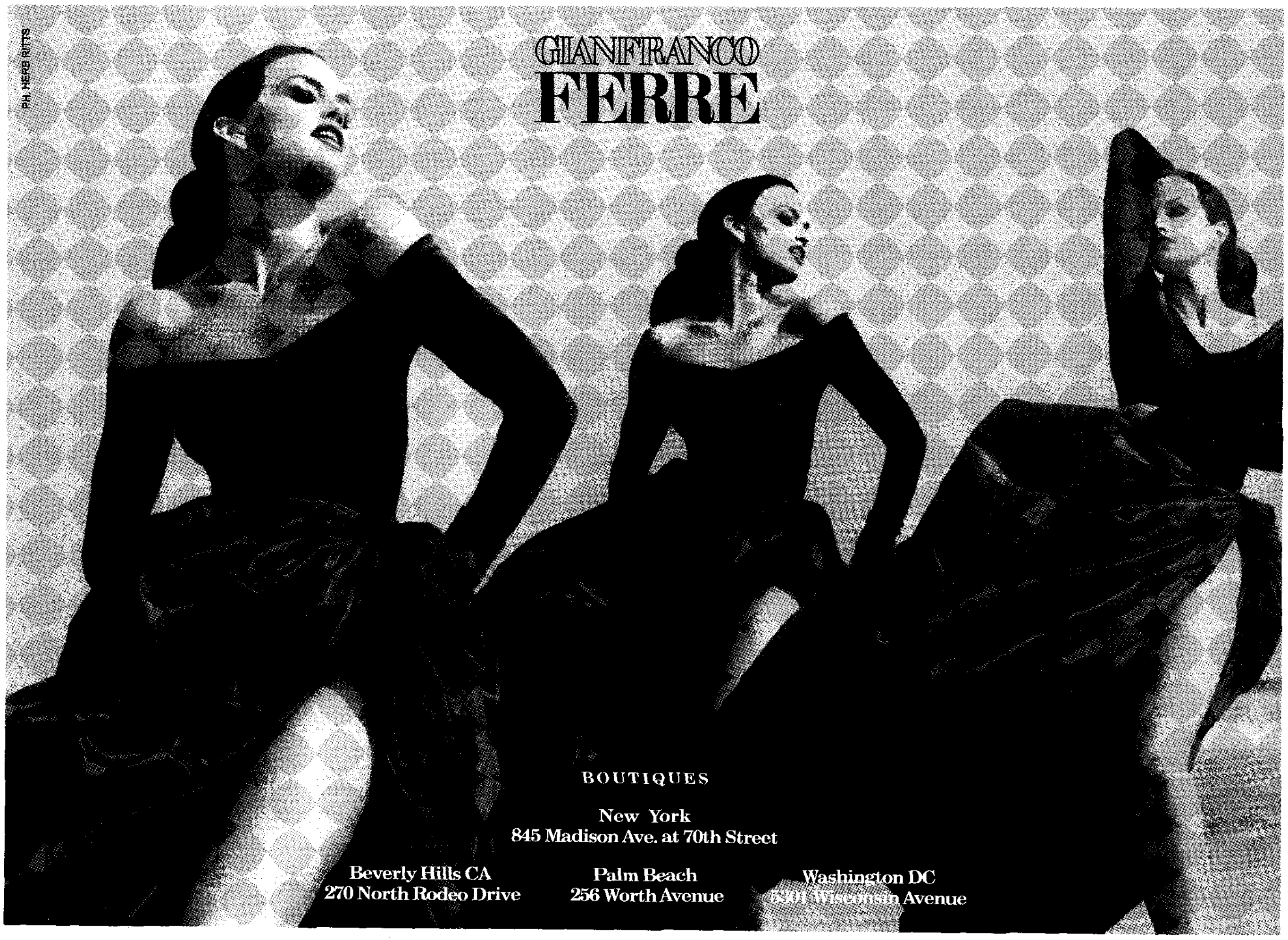
The room contained framed photographs from Madonna's book "Sex," which depicted scenes of louche S & M violence (Madonna, in an evening dress, being abused; nude dancers, with collars, being ridden by Daniel de La Falaise in a dinner jacket). The scenes had been enacted and photographed at the Gaiety. "*Miss* Ciccone," Talley said, with disdain, barely looking at the photographs. "My dear, we do *not* discuss the vulgar."

IN inspecting and appraising his surroundings, André Leon Talley was working—the creative director in pursuit of inspiration. It is the same sort of work he does in the more conventional environs of his working day. At *Vogue*, Talley is many things—art director, stylist, fashion writer, and producer. As a producer, Talley suggests unlikely combinations, hoping for interesting results. Recently, he arranged to have Camilla Nickerson, a young fashion editor at *Vogue* and a proponent of the glamour-misshapen-by-irony look, design a photo spread on Geoffrey Beene, a designer committed to glamour not misshapen by anything. As an art director, Talley from time to time oversees cover shoots, especially those involving celebrities. He tries to insure that the photographer will produce an image that makes both the clothes and the celebrity look appealing and provides enough clear space in the frame for the magazine's art director to strip in cover lines. At the same time, Talley encourages the celebrity to project the kind of attitude that *Vogue* seeks to promote on its covers: relaxed and elegant but accessible. He does so by acting as both therapist and stylist. He soothes his subjects' anxieties about the cover shoot by exclaiming, as he dresses them, that this or that garment has never looked better.

It is in the production of stories he conceives on his own that Talley employs all his talents simultaneously. Before a season's new designer collections are shown to the press, Talley visits various houses to look for recurring motifs, in order to build a story around them. During a recent season, he discerned that two or three collections featured lace. *Vogue* then devised a story based on the mystery of lace, and had Helmut Newton photograph lace gloves, lace boots, and lace bodices in a way that enhanced the mystery. Talley chose which details of the clothes should be photographed. In conjunction with Newton, he also chose the models, the hair-and-makeup people, and the locations.

Talley will sometimes write the text to accompany the fashion spread he has conceived. At other times, he will act simply as a cultural reporter, writing pieces on new designers and choosing the best examples of their work to be photographed. Talley has written on interiors, too, directing the photographer to capture images that complement his text. "My dear, an editor must, *must* be there to fluff the pillows!" he says, explaining his presence at these photo shoots.

ANDRÉ LEON TALLEY'S office at *Vogue* in Paris, where he is based, is a high-ceilinged space, painted white, with large windows facing the Boulevard Saint-Germain; it is surprisingly bare, except for two desks and many photographs on the walls, including a large one in color by Karl Lagerfeld of Talley carrying a big fur muff. There Talley will sometimes perform a kind of boss-man theatre—throw papers about, slam telephones down, noisily expel the incompetent. "This is too much. What story do we need to be working on, children? What *story*? Let's get cracking, darlings, on fur. *Fuh, fuh, fuh.* One must set the mood around the *fuh* and the heels, the hair, the skin, the nipples under the *fuh*, the hair around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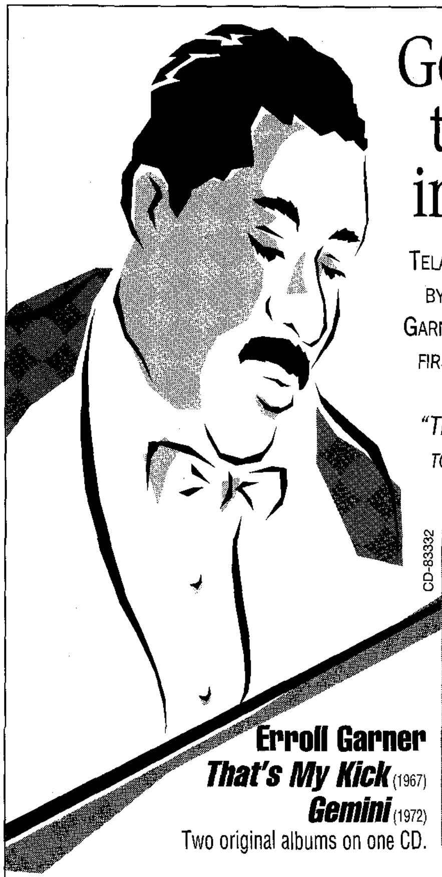

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Paul Cézanne, *Compotier, Pitcher, and Fruit* (detail) 1892-94 © 1994 The Barnes Foundation

the nipples, the *fuh* clinging to the nipples, sweat, oysters, champagne, *régence!*" He conveys not only dissatisfaction but also the promise that, once he is satisfied, his reflexive endearments ("darling," "child," and so forth) will be heartfelt.

André Leon Talley, in a blue pinstriped suit, walked into his office one day making several demands that could not be met, since his assistant was not there to meet them. That Talley had, hours before, dismissed his assistant for the day was a fact he chose to ignore. He sat at his desk and began upsetting papers on it—papers that had clearly been left in some order. He then complained about the lack of order. He complained about the lack of a witness to the lack of order. He summoned by intercom a young woman named Georgie Newbery, an assistant in the fashion department, to be such a witness.

"Georgie!" Talley exclaimed as she quietly entered the room. Her eyes were focussed on Talley, who, as a result of the attention, seemed to grow larger. "I told Sam never, *nevah* to leave my desk in this state of . . . disorder! I can't find my papers."

"What papers, André?" Newbery asked.

"The papers, darling! The papers! I need a telephone number on the . . . papers! Can you believe this, child?" Talley asked of no one in particular. "I need the number of the soirée, darling," he said, slumping in a caricature of weariness. He covered his face with his hands and moaned. Newbery picked a piece of paper off his assistant's desk and handed it to him. Talley looked at the paper: on it was the telephone number. There was a silence; Talley seemed dissatisfied at having the phone number, the problem solved, the event over. He paused, as if to consider the next event he would create. Looking up at Newbery, Talley said, "Georgie, I need three thousand francs! At *once!*"

ANDRÉ LEON TALLEY has been the creative director of *Vogue* for six years. During that time, he has seen many looks come and go—the grunge look, the schoolgirl look, the sex-kitten look, the New Romantic look, the reconstituted-hippie look, the athletic-wear-meets-the-street look. In the years

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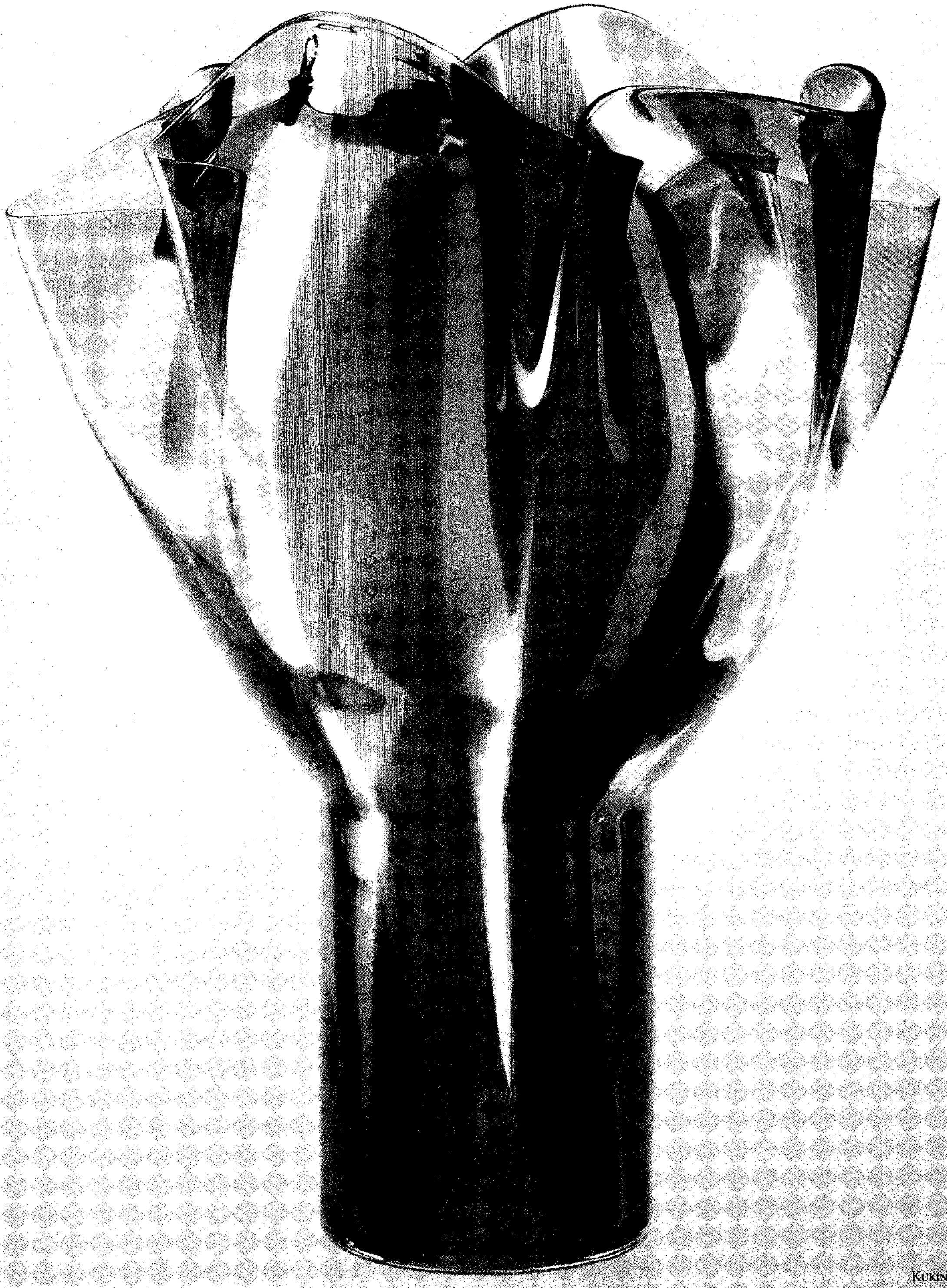
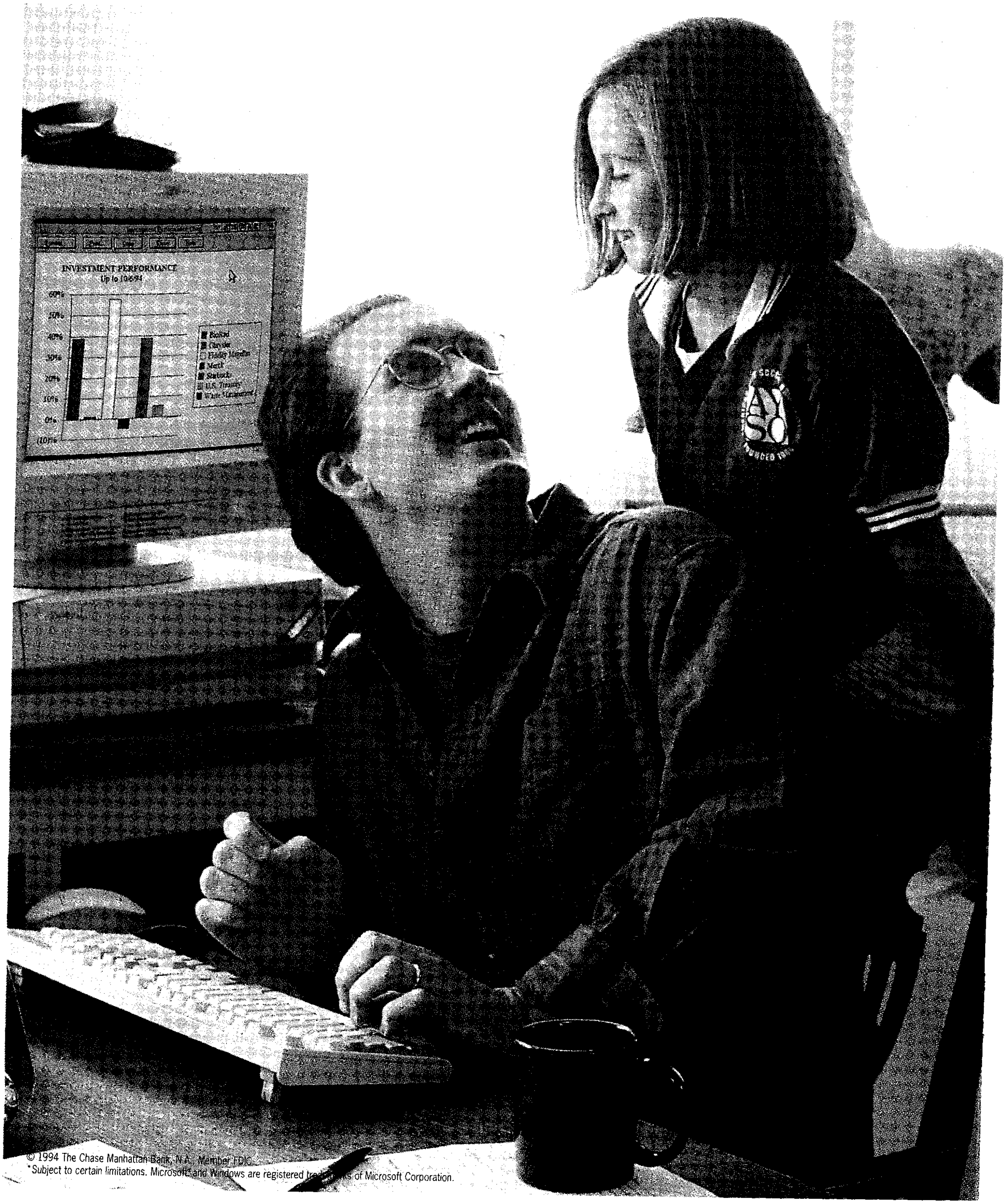


KUKINTO DESIGN: TIMO SARPANEVA

Bergdorf Goodman

Neiman Marcus
Selected Stores

ME & MY M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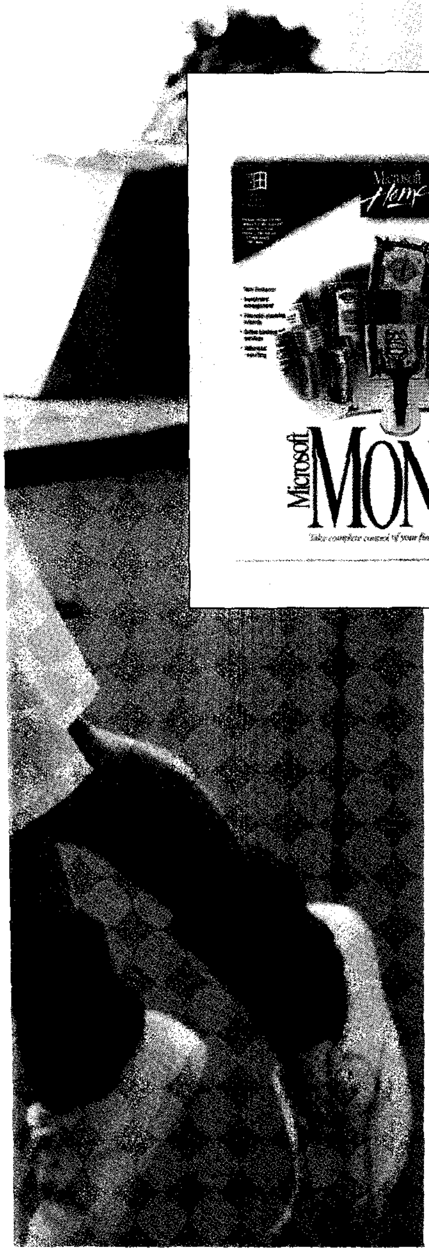

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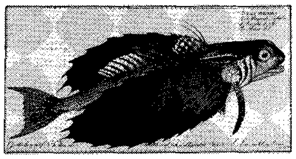

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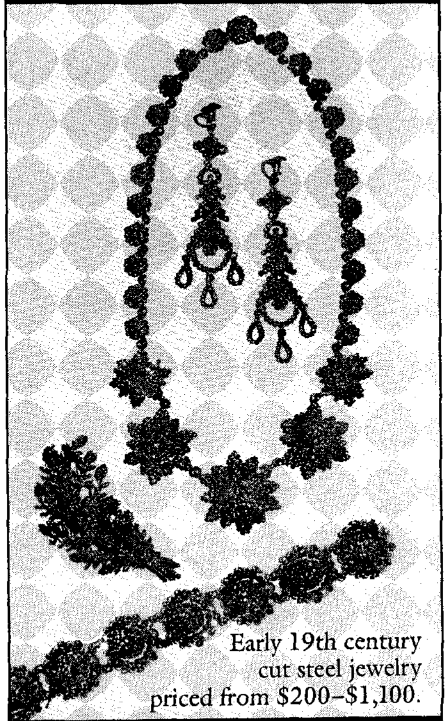

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I have known him, though, Talley's own look has consistently been one of rigorous excess. In his way, he has become the last editorial custodian of unfettered glamour, and the only fashion editor who figures at all in the popular imagination. He is the fashion editor who, seemingly sparing no expense for models, clothes, props, photographers, and airplane tickets to far-flung locations—a farm in Wales, a burlesque house on West Forty-sixth Street—pursues that which the public will perceive, without naming it, as allure.

This pursuit begins in Talley's Paris apartment, which is situated near the Invalides, where Napoleon is entombed. The apartment is small but rich in talismans of allure: scented candles, flower-patterned draperies that puddle on the floor, a large flower-patterned screen, a Regency bed, books artfully arranged on a table in the vestibule. The walls are covered in beige rice paper. There is a small dark room off the vestibule with a VCR attached to an oversized television; on the walls are a number of drawings by Karl Lagerfeld and a poster-size, black-and-white photograph of a black man's torso by Annie Leibovitz.

Talley begins telephoning in the morning, often as early as six o'clock, to suss out what might be "the next thing." When Talley telephones a designer, he may ask, "Darling, have you had a moment?" In an industry notoriously suspicious of language, Talley's grandiloquence transports the designer into the role of artist. It does so by placing the designer's work in the realm of the historic: "This collection is more divine than the last, Monsieur Ferrè, in that it is a high moment of Grecian simplicity, of fluted skirts in the material of a high rustling mega-moment, from room to room, à la the essence of King Louis XV, à la the true spirit of couture!"

On the other hand, Talley does not see the work without the frame of commerce around it; in this sense, he is like an art dealer, whose survival is based on an evaluation of the market and of how the work at hand will shape the market, or be shaped by it, in future months. When Chanel, Dior, de la Renta, and other couture and ready-to-wear houses advertise in *Vogue*, they signal the affinity between their aesthetic and the

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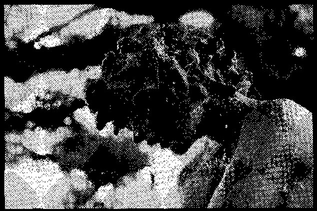

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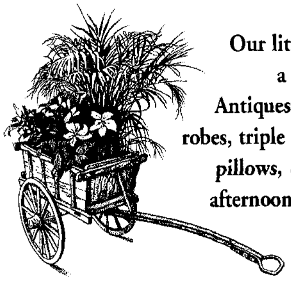

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world that André Leon Talley has created. Designers trust him, the moneyed women he brings to the designers trust him, and the women's husbands trust him with their wives. Drawing on this fund of trust, Talley presents, in the pages of *Vogue*, the work of European designers in an atmosphere of guilt-free exuberance that an American audience, standing in line at the supermarket reading *Vogue*, can trust.

"Magazines are not a Diderot moment of œuvreness," Talley says. "They are monthly ventures that should amuse and earn money by showing how *kind* money can be." In the stories that Talley has produced for *Vogue* in recent years—"The Armani Edge," "Feets of Brilliance," "Which Way Couture?," and "The Couture Journals," among others—everything is seduction. Talley's delicate orchestration and manipulation of the designers and buyers and photographers and editorial staff contributing to his vision are never seen, of course. What matters most to André Leon Talley is the image in his head of a woman looking at the page and imagining herself on it, unaware of all that André Leon Talley has contributed to her imagination.

ANDRÉ LEON TALLEY says he owes his desire to uphold what he calls "the world of opulence! opulence! opulence! maintenance! maintenance! maintenance!" to the late Diana Vreeland, who was the fashion editor for twenty-five years at *Harper's Bazaar*, the editor-in-chief of *Vogue* for eight years, and thereafter a special consultant to the Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute, where she mounted audacious shows on Balenciaga, the eighteenth-century woman, equestrian fashion, and Yves Saint Laurent. It was during Vreeland's planning and installation of one such show—"Romantic and Glamorous Hollywood Design," in 1974—that Talley and Vreeland first met, through the parents of one of his college classmates. He later came to work for her as an unpaid assistant.

Vreeland was the most recognizable person in the fashion industry—indeed, the very image of the fashion editor—with her heavily rouged cheeks and lips, red fingernails, and sleek black hair; her red environments; her pronouncements (bluejeans "are the most beautiful things

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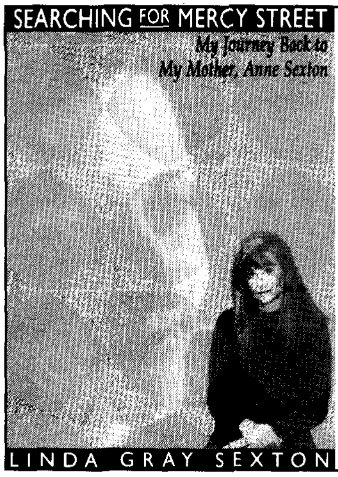
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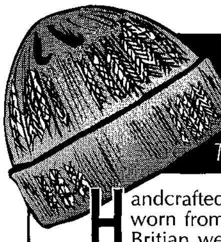

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since the gondola"; Brigitte Bardot's "lips made Mick Jagger's lips *possible*"); her credos ("Of course, you understand I'm looking for the most *far-fetched* perfection"; "There's nothing more boring than narcissism—the tragedy of being totally . . . me"); her standards (having her paper money ironed, the soles of her shoes buffed with rhinoceros horn); and her extravagance of vision (photographic emphasis on nudity, drugs, and jewels).

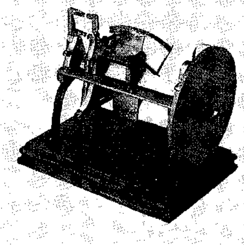
By the time they met, Talley had gradually constructed a self that was recognizably a precursor of the André Leon Talley of today. And its most influential component was the formidable chic of his maternal grandmother. Talley was born in Washington, D.C., and when he was two months old he was sent by his parents to live with his grandmother Bennie Frances Davis, in Durham, North Carolina. "An extraordinary woman with blue hair, like Elsie de Wolfe" is how he describes her. "You know what one fundamental difference between whites and blacks is? If there's trouble at home for white people, they send the child to a psychiatrist. Black folks just send you to live with Grandma."

As a teen-ager, Talley made regular trips to the white section of Durham to buy *Vogue*, and these forays were another significant influence on his development. "My uncles cried 'Scandal! Scandal!' when I said I wanted to grow up to be a fashion editor," he says. "I discovered so early that the world was *cruel*. My mother didn't like my clothes. Those white people in Durham were so awful. And there I was, just this lone jigaboo . . . creature. And fashion in *Vogue* seemed so kind. So *opulently* kind. A perfect image of things. I began to think like an editor when I began to imagine presenting the women I knew in the pages of *Vogue:* my grandmother's style of perfection in the clothes she made; her version of couture."

In a snapshot of Talley from his college days, he is sitting with two female friends. What makes him recognizable is not just his physical appearance—the long, thin body; the large, vulnerable mouth jutting out from the long, thin face—but also his clothes. Unlike the other students, who are dressed in T-shirts and jeans, Talley wears a blue sweater with short sleeves over a white

JAEGER-LECOULTRE

A MILLIONTH OF A METER – A GIANT STEP IN WATCHMAKING.



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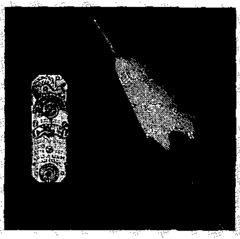

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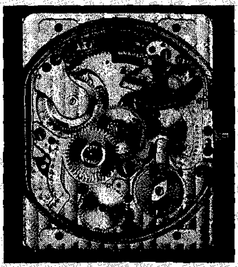

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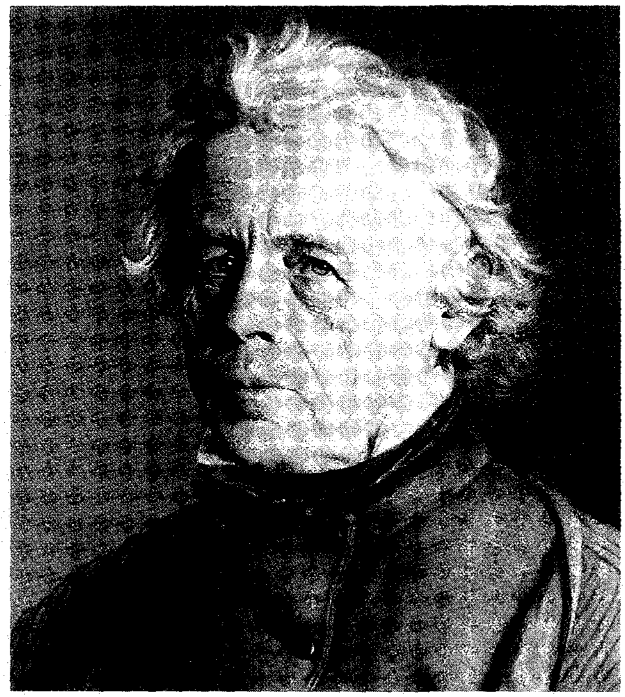

Antoine LeCoultre's legacy to watchmaking: an inquiring mind, a sense of perfection, and the Manufacture he founded in 1833.

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MOVEMENTS IN TECHNIQUE AND CRAFTSMANSHIP, FROM LEFT: TOURBILLON, JAEGER-LECOULTRE CALIBER 828 MOVEMENT, 1993; TOURBILLON, JLC CALIBER 170, 1946; REVERSO ART DECO, JLC CALIBER 822, 1992; MINUTE-REPEATER, LECOULTRE CALIBER 19 RMV, LATE 19TH CENTURY; MASTER, SELF-WINDING MECHANISM WITH 21K GOLD ROTOR, JLC CALIBER 889/1, 1992; MINUTE-REPEATER, JLC CALIBER 943, 1993; THE WORLD'S SMALLEST MECHANICAL WATCH MOVEMENT, LECOULTRE CALIBER 101, 1929.

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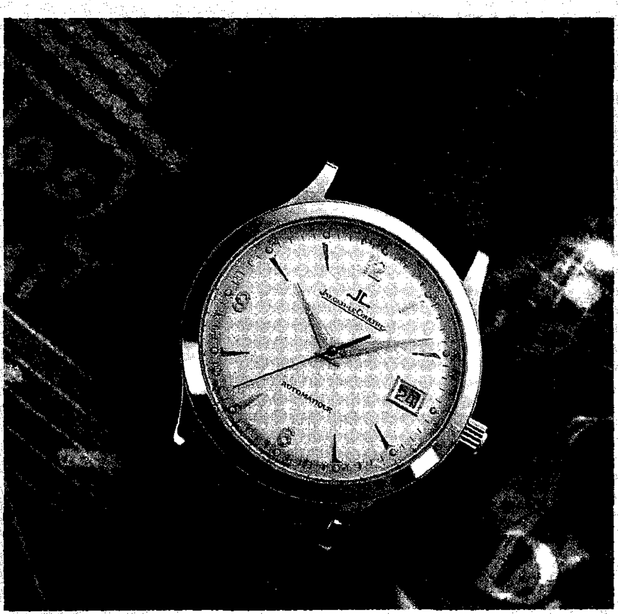

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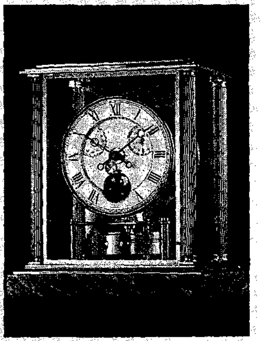
ONLY THE ATMOS CLOCK WORKS BY CONVERTING CHANGES IN AIR TEMPERATURE INTO ENOUGH ENERGY FOR THE *PERPETUAL RECORD OF* TIME.

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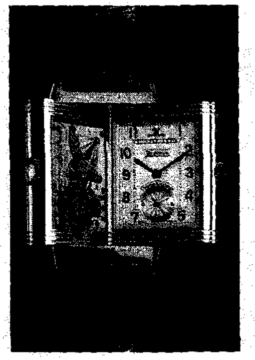
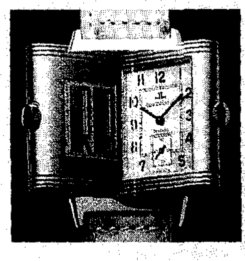


The tourbillon precision escapement. The most sophisticated mechanical watchmaking is worthy of the Reverso.



Part of the Reverso legend: a personal monogram in Art Deco style.

Some of our best ideas are born in the most unlikely places. The legendary Reverso, for example, was conceived in India in 1930 for British colonial officers who wanted a watch that would survive the hard knocks of polo, and yet look smart at the club. The elegant solution was a watch that simply turned over to shield the fragile glass with its metal back, at the same time displaying the owner's engraved monogram or coat of arms. The Reverso has been in continuous production at Jaeger-LeCoultre since 1931, making it the oldest unchanged wristwatch still made today. But the proof of a good idea is that it opens possibilities for better ones. Still in its original Art Deco style, the Reverso today goes beyond basic timekeeping to complicated specialties which exemplify the top level of mechanical watchmaking techniques – the gravity-defying Tourbillon escapement; the sound of time captured in a minute-repeater; two watches and two time-zones in a single Reverso with back-to-back dials, and the epitome of 20th-century styling in the Art Deco model. In gold, in steel, and in five sizes, the Reverso also becomes the perfect jewel, encasing the world's smallest mechanical movement, the 1929 LeCoultre caliber 101.

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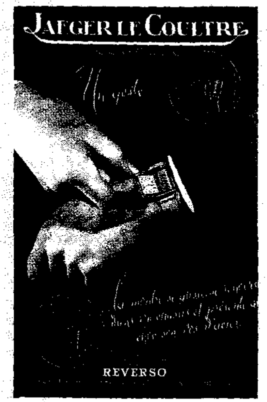
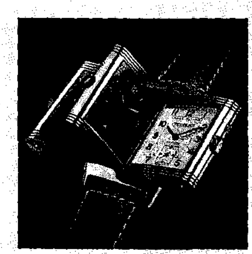


Advertising may have changed since the 1930s, but the Reverso remains true to its original concept.



Turn over to another time-zone and another watch. The Reverso Duo features back to back dials and contra-rotating hands.

Exhibition:
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Jaeger-LeCoultre is pleased to announce the U.S. premiere of an historical timepiece exhibition, including an extraordinary collection of Reverso models dating from 1931 to the present. This exhibition can be viewed by the public, free of charge, at the following retail locations:

November 4-12, 1994 – Cellini, The Waldorf Astoria, 301 Park Avenue, New York, NY.

November 17-19, 1994 – Mayor's, The Falls Mall, 8888 Howard Drive, Miami, FL.

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shirt with long sleeves, a brooch in the shape of a crescent moon, large aviator glasses with yellow lenses, and a blue knit hat. He looks delighted to be wearing these clothes. He looks delighted to be with these women.

Talley earned a B.A. in French literature at North Carolina Central University in 1970. His interest in the world of allure outside his grandmother's closet, away from Durham, coincided with his interest in French. He says of his discovery that couture was a part of French culture, and that his grandmother practiced her version of it, "You could have knocked me over with a feather! And it was stretching all the way back to the ancien régime, darling! Introduced to me by my first French instructor, Miss Cynthia P. Smith, in the fields of Durham, North Carolina! The entire French œuvre of oldness and awfulness flipping one out into the Belle Époque bodice of the music hall, Toulouse-Lautrec, an atmosphere of decadence, leading us to Josephine Baker and . . . me!"

Talley's immersion in French gave him a model to identify with: Baudelaire, on whose work he wrote his master's thesis, at Brown University in the early seventies. And it was while he was at Brown, liberated by the Baudelairean image of the flaneur, that Talley began to exercise fully his penchant for extravagant personal dress. He was known for draping himself in a number of cashmere sweaters. He was known for buying, on his teaching-assistant stipend, Louis Vuitton luggage.

"Obviously, he was not going to teach French," Dr. Yvonne Cormier, a schoolmate of Talley's at Brown, says. "André thought it was just good manners to look wonderful. It was a *moral* issue. And his language reflected that. André could never just go to his room and study. He had to *exclaim*, 'They've sent me to this prison! Now I have to go to my chambers and have a moment.' "

After Talley left Brown and completed his stint as a volunteer with Diana Vreeland at the Met, he became known in New York fashion circles for these things: insisting, at his local post office, on the most *beautiful* current stamps and holding up the line until they materialized; serving as a personal shopper for Miles Davis at the request of Davis's

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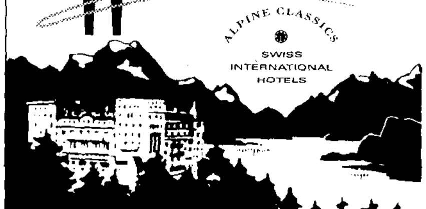

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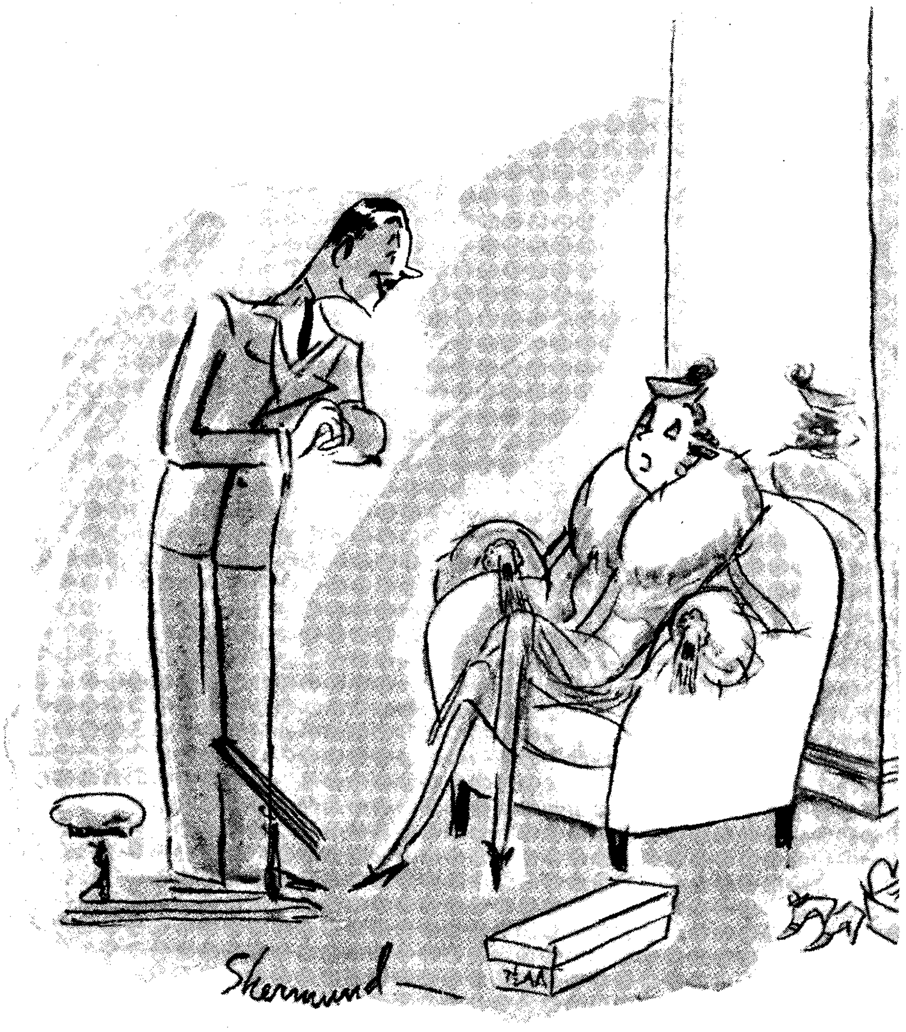
companion, Cicely Tyson; answering the telephone at Andy Warhol's *Interview*, in his capacity as a receptionist, with a jaunty "*Bonjour!*" and taking down messages in purple ink (for bad news) and gold (good news); wearing a pith helmet and kneesocks in the summer; being referred to by the envious as Queen Kong; becoming friends with the heiress Doris Duke and attending, at her invitation, many of her appearances as a singer with a black gospel choir; overspending on clothes and furnishings and running up personal debts in his habitual effort to live up to the grand amalgamation of his three names.

The late seventies, when André Leon Talley came into his own, is the period when designers like Yves Saint Laurent and Halston produced the clothes that Talley covered at the beginning of his career as a fashion editor at *WWD*, clothes often described as glamorous. It is the period referred to in the clothes being produced now by designers like Marc Jacobs and Anna Sui. "It was a time when I could take Mrs. Vreeland and Lee Radziwill to a LaBelle concert at the Beacon and it wouldn't look like I was about to mug them," Talley says.

Daniela Morera, a correspondent for Italian *Vogue*, has a different recollection. "André was privileged because he was a close friend of Mrs. Vreeland's," she says. "Black people were as segregated in the industry then as they are now. They've always been the don't-get-too-close-darling exotic. André enjoyed a lot of attention from whites because he was ambitious and amusing. He says it wasn't bad, because he didn't know how bad it was for other blacks in the business. He was successful because he wasn't a threat. He'll never be an editor-in-chief. How could America have *that* dictating what the women of America will wear? Or representing them? No matter that André's been the greatest crossover act in the industry for quite some time. Like forever."



"Show me something mad in a mule."

TALLEY'S fascination stems, in part, from his being the *only one.* In the media or the arts, the only one is usually male, always somewhat "colored," and almost always gay. His career is based, in varying degrees, on talent, race, nonsexual charisma, and an association with people in power. To all appearances, the only one is a person with power, but is not *the* power. He is not just defined but controlled by a professional title, because he believes in the importance of his title and of the power with which it associates him. If he is black, he is a symbol of white anxiety about his presence in the larger world and the guilt such anxiety provokes. Other anxieties preoccupy him: anxieties about salary and prestige and someone else's opinion ultimately being more highly valued than his. He elicits many emotions from his colleagues, friendship and loyalty rarely being among them, since he does not believe in friendship that is innocent of an interest in what his title can do.

Talley is positioned, uniquely, at the intersection of fashion, magazine publishing, television, and high society. He regards his position as a privilege, and he flaunts it. "A large part of his life is *Vogue*," Candy Pratts Price, the magazine's fashion director, says about him. "Which explains the vulnerable, intense moods he goes through when he thinks someone here is against him. We've all been there with those moods of his, and *there* is pretty intense."

Talley's emotional involvement with women rises in part from nostalgia. He seems to project his grandmother's intentions and concerns for him, and Cynthia P. Smith's and Diana Vreeland's as well, onto his female colleagues at *Vogue*, and he seems to feel spurned when they exercise the independence inherent in a modern-day professional relationship. Often, the results are disastrous. When Talley is in favor, his colleagues adopt him as a totem of editorial success; when he is not, they regard him as a glittering but superfluous accessory.

His interest in romance is nostalgic, too. For him, romance is not about ending his loneliness; rather, it flows from the idea, expounded by Baudelaire, that

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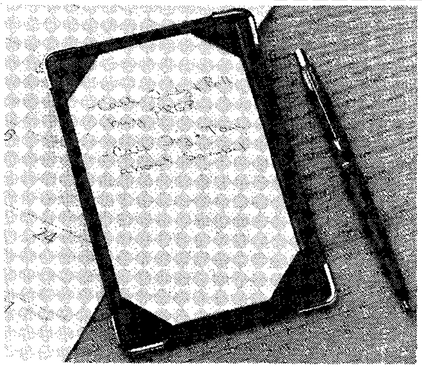

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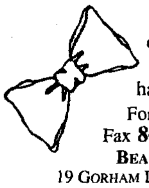

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love is never truly attained, only yearned for. (Talley's contemporary version of this: "No man, child," he might say, telephoning from his apartment in Paris. "No man. Just another video evening alone for the child of culture.") Talley's romantic yearnings are melancholic: he is susceptible to the prolonged, unrequited "crush" but is immune to involvement. He avoids engaging men he is attracted to. Generally, he is attracted to men who avoid him. He avoids the potential rejection and hurt that are invariable aspects of romantic love. Going to a gay bar with Talley, then, is an odd experience. In gay bars, as a rule, all bets are off: everyone is the same as everyone else because everyone is after the same thing. In a sense, the common pursuit divests everyone present of his title. Talley rarely speaks to anyone in this sort of environment. Mostly, he glowers at men he finds appealing and lays the blame for their lack of immediate interest in him on racism, or on the sexually paranoid environment that AIDS has fostered everywhere. Perhaps he just prefers the imagery of love made familiar by fashion magazines: images of the subject exhausted by "feeling," undone by a crush, recuperating in an atmosphere of glamour and allure.

Once, in New York, I had dinner with Talley and his friend the comedian Sandra Bernhard. She asked me how long I had known André. I said, "I fell in love with him in Paris." There was a silence—a silence that André did not fill with being pleased at or made shy by my comment. He grew large in his seat. He grew very dark and angry. And then he exclaimed, with great force, "You did not fall in love with me! You were in love with Paris! It was all the fabulous things I showed you in Paris! Lagerfeld's house! Dior! It wasn't me! It wasn't! It was Paris!"

When I first met Talley, I did not tell him that my interest in him was based in part on what other blacks in the fashion industry had said about him, on the way they had pointed him out as the only one. Blacks in the fashion industry have spoken of Talley with varying degrees of reverence, envy, and mistrust (which is how non-blacks in the fashion industry have spoken of him as well). One black American designer has called André Leon Talley "a fool. He'll only help those kids—designers like Gal-

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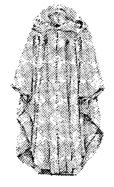

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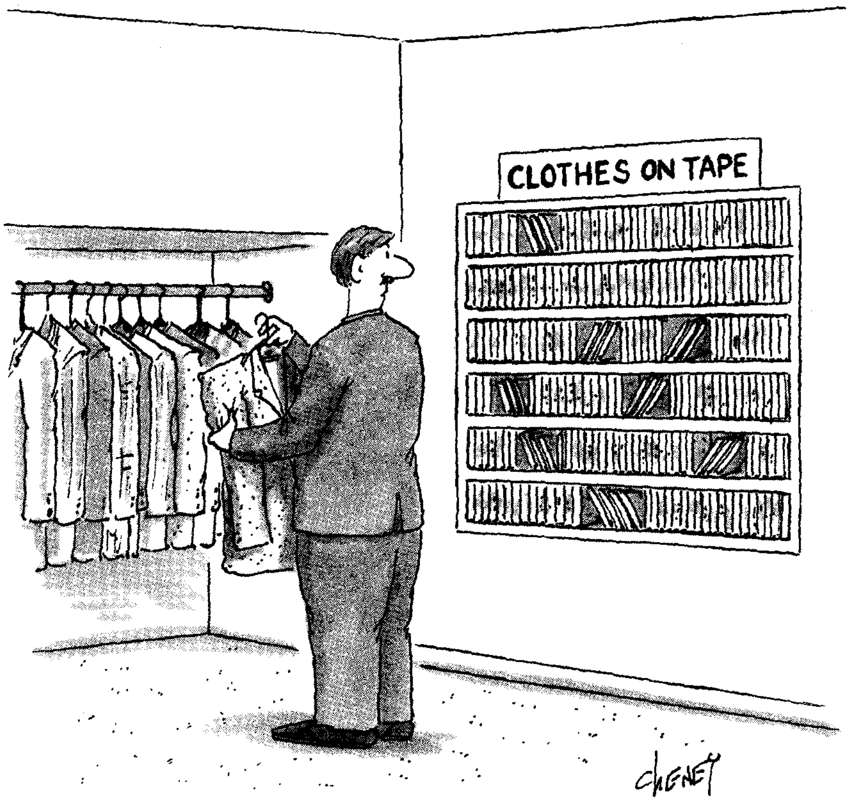


liano—if they've got social juice, if they're liked by socialites, the women who tell André what to do." Talley complains about people who underestimate the difficulty of his position. "It's exhausting to be the only one with the access, the influence, to prevent the children from looking like jigaboos in the magazine—when they do appear in the magazine. It's lonely."

TALLEY gave a luncheon in Paris a few years ago to celebrate the couture season's start. The people he welcomed to the luncheon—held in the Café Flore's private dining room, on the second floor—included Kenneth Jay Lane, a jewelry designer; Inès de la Fressange, a former Chanel model and spokesperson; Joe Eula, a fashion illustrator; Roxanne Lowitt, a photographer; and Maxime de La Falaise, a fashion doyenne, and her daughter, LouLou, the Yves Saint Laurent muse.

Following shirred eggs and many bottles of wine, Roxanne Lowitt, her black hair and black Chinese jacket a blur of organization, invited the guests to assemble in order to be photographed. LouLou de La Falaise removed an ancient huge round compact from her purse and began to powder her nose as her mother sat in readiness. Joe Eula ignored Lowitt and continued drinking. Talley got up from his seat to sit near Maxime de La Falaise, who had admired a large turquoise ring he wore.

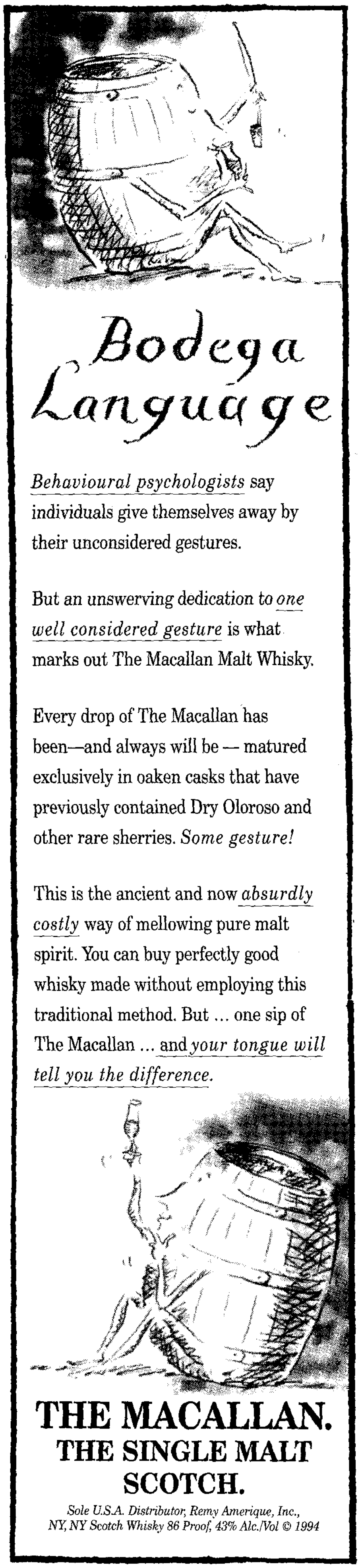
"Look, LouLou!" Talley shouted. "The color of this ring is divine, no? Just like the stone you gave me!"

"What?" LouLou de La Falaise asked, barely disguising her boredom.

"This ring, child. Just like the stone you gave me, no?"

LouLou de La Falaise did not respond. She nodded toward Roxanne Lowitt, and Lowitt instructed her to stand behind Maxime de La Falaise and Talley. LouLou de La Falaise said, "I will stand there only if André tries not to look like such a nigger dandy."

Several people laughed, loudly. None laughed louder than André Leon Talley. But it seemed to me that a couple of things happened before he started laughing: he shuttered his eyes, his grin grew larger, and his back went rigid, as he saw his belief in the durability of glamour and allure shatter before him in a million glistening bits. Talley attempted to pick those pieces up. He sighed, then stood and said, "Come on, children. Let's *see* something. Let's visit the House of Galliano." ♦



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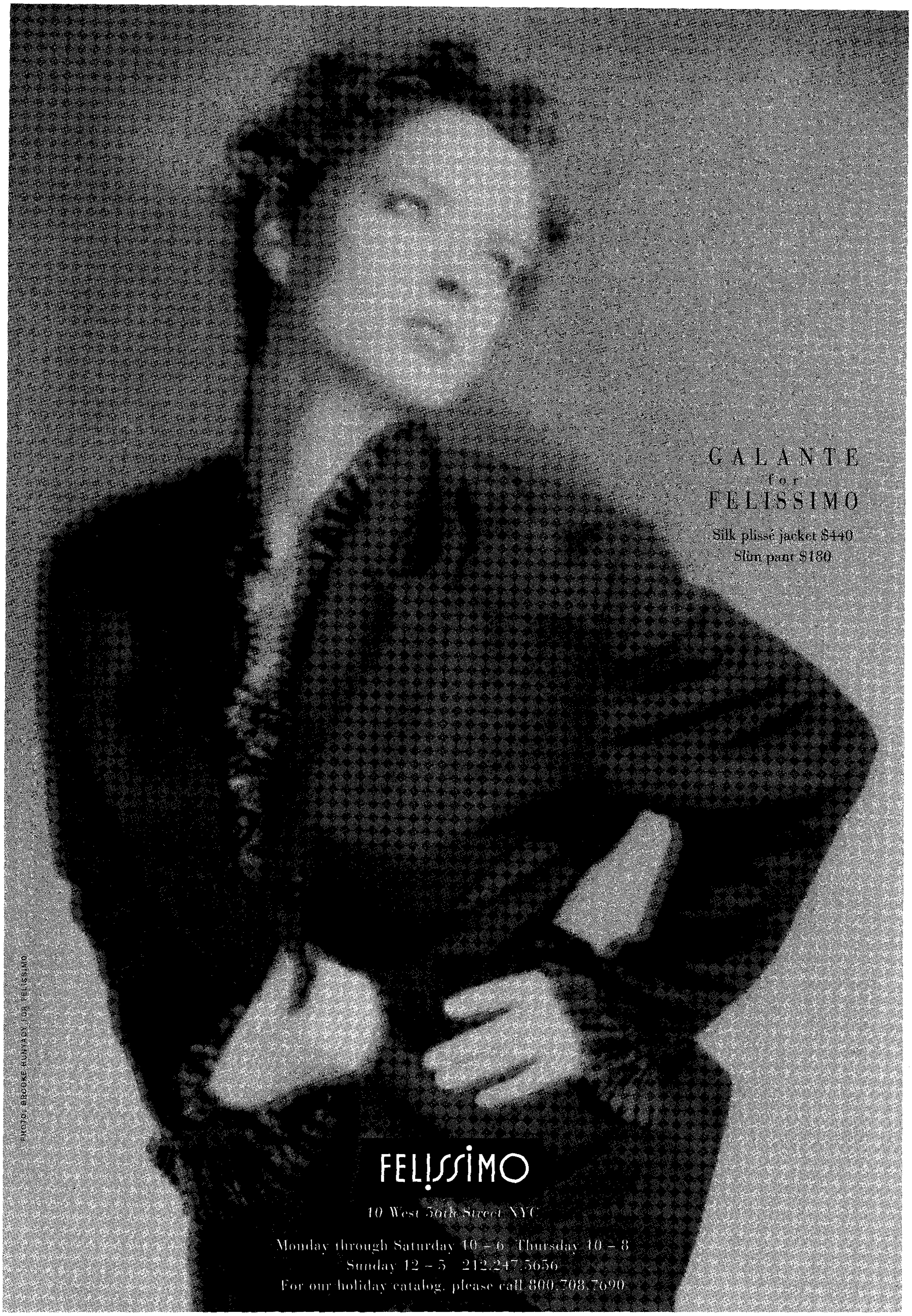
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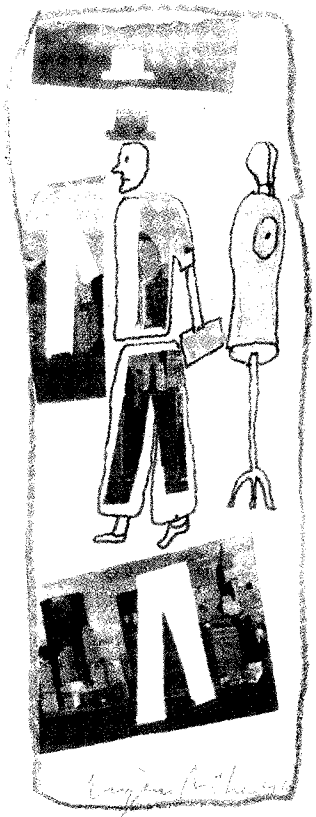
A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE SECOND SKIN

Real style happens when people use clothes to strut their stuff, and nowhere is this practice more provocative than in the big city.

BY HAROLD BRODKEY

PEOPLE in the city say now (and it is said of them) that they don't care about fashion; but that remark itself is fashionable. It may be the centrist, or most ordinary, position to take. But few of us want, even in a dream, to walk naked through a crowded ballroom. We do not want to be judged—or thought about—utterly bare-skinned and visible. We do not want to give out so much information about ourselves and to receive so little of the same kind in return. We want to be dressed, and we want others to be dressed somewhat similarly, partly for the democracy of it, and partly so that we are speaking a halfway common language—so that we are not isolated inside our own heads, trapped in the babble of madness or in fears of obesity or whatever, but are part of a dialogue about acceptable or exciting appearances.



In offices nowadays, there seems to have been a modification of this not-caring stance, in the form of clothes worn by both women and men who want to show off their bodies, and like to introduce a disconcertingly sexual note into the atmosphere of conferences, brainstorming, and plotting.

What is clear is that clothes and the city are married to each other. It is not really comfortable to go naked on the street in a modern city. Such nakedness isn't flattering, even for people who look good naked on a beach. I suppose that's because of city dirt, and the ways that light caroms off the buildings, and the unnatural patterns of wind and heat and cold in the city. Look at the people in tank tops on the street; look at runners in the park, partly stripped. Great beauty is out of the question. But in sunlight, near the ocean, everyone is strangely wonderful-looking. I am not talking about beauty in terms of bones and muscle but about a quality that bodies have at the beach, and, in the city, in clothes: they give off a sense of the moment, a sense of pleasure—and a suggestion of some potential satisfaction to be had in moments ahead.

JUST a bit of history, a bit of sociology: In the nineteen-twenties and thirties, few American magazines or American people spoke of "American style." In fact, the phrase was an oxymoron if your sense of style was highly developed. The reason for that was context: much of America then was small towns, and these places hadn't the architectural settings or the outdoor spaces—hadn't the culture—to support the idea of "high" style, let alone the necessary button shops, seamstresses, dry cleaners, hairdressers, and the like. I was born in the Midwest, in a town of five thousand inhabitants, which I left when I was two. I went back when I was thirty-two, and, on the basis of photographs and my earliest memory, it seemed the women were dressed in roughly the same way as when I had left. I'd like to say the hemlines had changed, but I think even the hemlines were the same.

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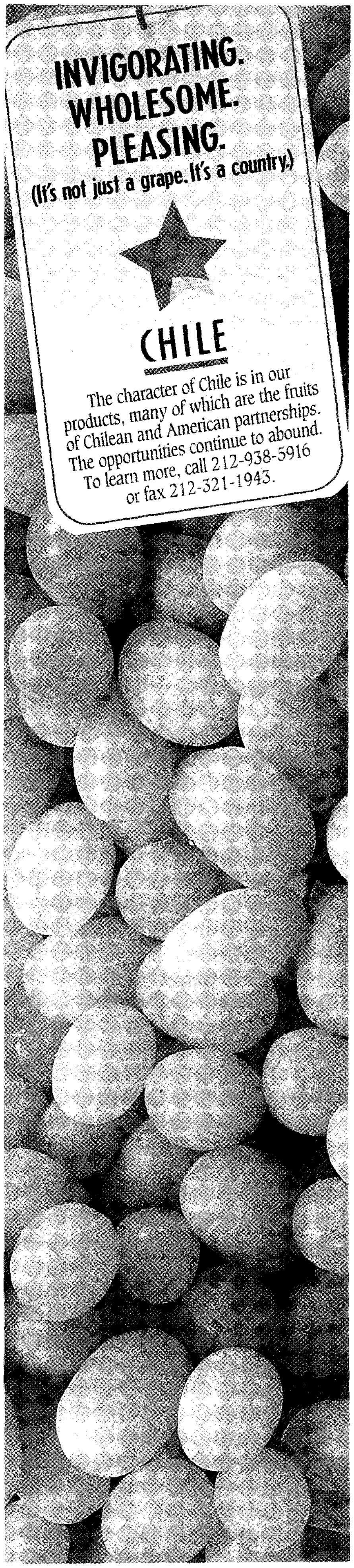
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tory suburbs, schoolteachers dressed differently from the other women, and so did the banker's wife. They experimented with *bits* of style. The banker himself dressed in an urban way, since he was not as local as the other businessmen; he was felt to have a broader and more sophisticated grasp of things.

For most of my early childhood, my family lived in an Illinois town of about thirty thousand, called Alton. Style there was overtly determined by money and by access to St. Louis, which was across the river (the Mississippi). People in Alton were rich enough—at least one very large fortune arose in the town, the Olin fortune—so that women wore New York clothes or Paris clothes or St. Louis clothes in order to show off. And hats. And gloves.

In those years, the great difference between small-town style, when it was actually stylish, and big-city or capital-city style was that the latter was aimed at the future, at something to come: it suggested romance, or a further step into cosmopolitan legend, into the next episode of a story about power. But small-town high style (as would later be true of suburban style) was not forward-looking; it was, just about absolutely, anti-future, or idyllic, which is to say anti-story, frozen, codified, utopian. Even if a woman got her hands on a Schiaparelli or a Mainbocher, it was a set piece, a final outfit—a sort of bossy version of the sweater set and pearls. This was because *real* style—the visual casting of yourself in the daring light of what you might wish for or be capable of doing—would, in the course of things, take you right out of town and into adventure, and very few women had that much nerve. Some did, and would be pointed out and whispered about. They were also the ones who talked well.

AT the moment, haute couture is just starting to admit that it is dead—well, not dead but not of great interest. In its old-fashioned way, it still works. Haute couture, just as it has been from its beginnings, is concerned with rank, with dominating a room by the way you look. And it does say you have money. But money nowadays doesn't have the quality of romance it did once (and may have again). Power has more romance these days. And so does anti-power.

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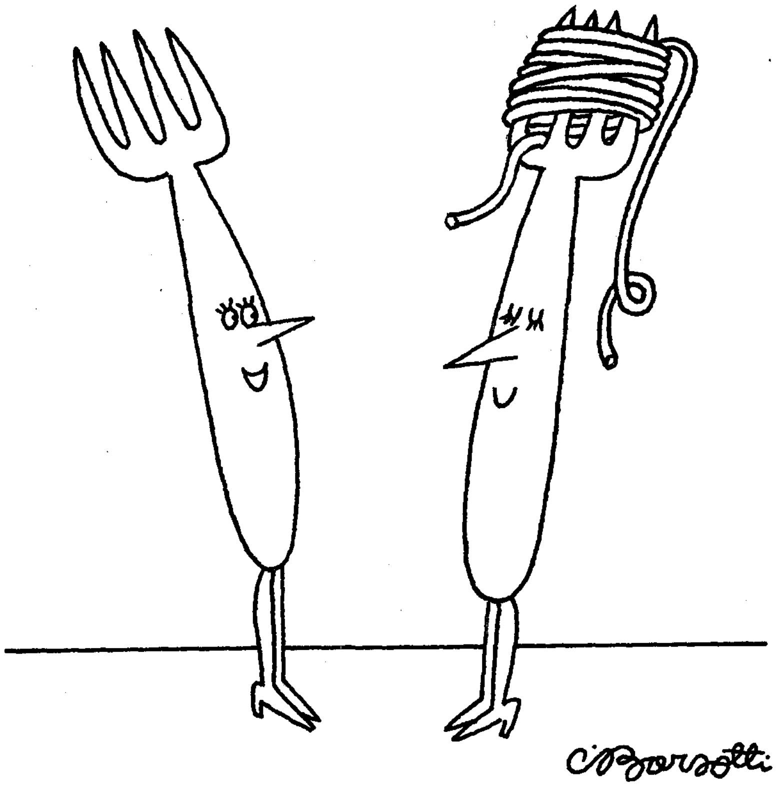

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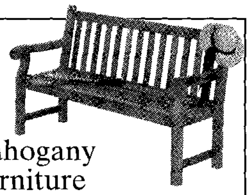

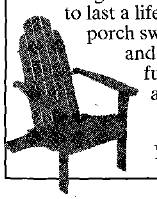

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along: a much more fascinating set of rules, a much more delicious sense of contexts and how to dress for them, which is felt at street level and has nothing to do with the magazines and the designers. Rank now means that you can dress down if you like, in part as a signal that you are available to play. The extremely expensive designer dress or beaded blazer and the important jewels serve to announce that you are very rich and quite knowledgeable. But they also signal that you are out of the game at its liveliest. You are mostly a heavy presence, a small-town one—you are part of the small-town circle of important people, in the middle of the big city's whirl of erotica and self-invented eligibility.

Romance in dress is not so strictly class-centered anymore. It is defined by a freedom from being coöpted, by the possession of a strong will and a strong sense of risk—actually, I mean a sense of lust, and curiosity, and a willingness to be thrill-mad, a little. Sexuality and romance are part and parcel of a T-shirt and jeans or shorts, unfussed-with hair, no makeup—indicating a kind of sincerity of physical existence. (And a sense that all matters of taste, and all tastes, are a smidgen kinky.) Serious style—that of some older women, and some rich women—announces a certain dishonesty about immortality, about the word "classic." And it seems to me that a man's clothes, if they are too obvious in what they say about his rank and métier, tend to look like counterfeit statements except in very rare instances, when some vibration of truth about the man himself comes through all the fabric and buttons. Then male style is stunning, is a knockout. But male power expressed in the equivalent of old-line haute couture—in very expensive suits and shirts—usually seems to indicate a downturn in profits. Why should men of real power *bother*? The panache of great success is conveyed better by the intelligence of the look of the woman a man is with or by the expression on his face than by his clothes. (Maybe a kind of college-town professorial-male flirtatious chic is where men these days should start, using Turnbull & Asser rip-offs and tactfully updated classic shoes and

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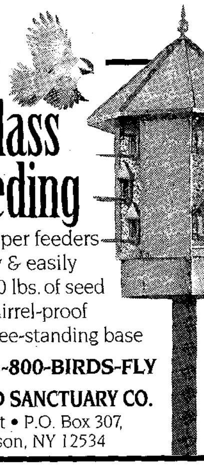

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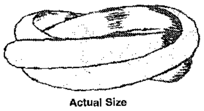

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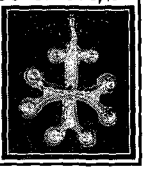

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belts; there's something witty about respectable shoes on a middle-aged man who jogs regularly and has a shot at a Nobel.)

Certain American upper-caste customs, such as heavy English suits in hot weather and thin coats in winter, have their touching side. Or very good, expensive long-worn tennis whites. These things do demonstrate strength and survivability. But they are too obvious as gestures. The person wearing these emblematic clothes is *the person making the gesture* and not a person with a full range of dialogue. That is, such gestures wipe out conversation. The person is busy mopping his or her forehead or pretending not to care about his or her tennis whites.

So, I think, the assertion of social class in dress is touching but not convincing. It is never convincing anymore without servants and great, great financial importance. It is ritual without substance. Claim without real privilege. But it is familiar to us—the claim of social rank in the not-so-rich—and dear, in its way. (Armani offers a comment on the notion of lineage, of inheritance in dress, since his clothes, with their elegant simplicities, their double meanings, seem to hint that one has a family past, of clothes and servants—a history of clothes, as it were.)

Does anyone want control of a room through clothes anymore? Social coöperation and *some* rank are what one wants. The categories of rich man's clothes, young man's clothes, intelligent woman's clothes, professional woman's clothes—the assertion of style as a function of intelligence or of stylelessness as a function of intelligence—have their specialized practitioners. And the depressives are always onstage. As are the underdressed narcissists. But a combination of some individuality in dress and some obscurity of personal intent, so that a riddle mechanism sets in (something paradoxically catches the eye and then can be ignored; the look is related to movement and to personality rather than to mood, and is suitable for half a dozen contexts), produces a jolt of response and amusement in city life. And the clothes required to achieve the effect, while costly to some degree, do not have as much to

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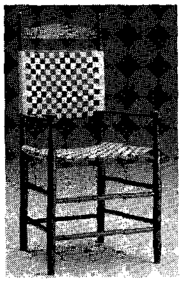

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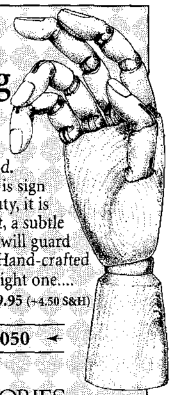

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do with money as with the signalling of wit and perversity.

ONCE, in the nineteen-thirties, I saw my parents leave the house dressed for a costume party. There they were, outside on the suburban street in early-evening summer light, dressed to go to a dance, in real nineteen-twenties clothes. Movies and photographs and drawings can't convey the excitement generated by those clothes in real life, in real light: the short spangled dress with its low-cut, roundish neckline, the long pearls and the aigrette, the spats and vest and fedora, the spiffy jacket. The raw flash of such clothes seemed to radiate rebellion—a sheer, strange erotic extremism and a suggestion of unbridled motion.

I remember almost all the clothes I wore in my childhood. (My parents on their deathbeds remembered their clothes, back over their entire lifetimes.) I remember everything I ever wore that had been badly chosen for the context or that someone said was ugly or the wrong color, and I still tend to burst out laughing as I did then—from nerves and gall. When I was little I had a sand-colored cashmere short-pants suit and a shirt with a Little Lord Fauntleroy frill at the neck and down the front, which made it impossible for me to button. My parents and my sister and my nurse used to take turns doing the buttons and brushing my hair curl by curl. (I had ringletted blond hair.) Like a lot of little boys, I had a Charles Lindbergh-style helmet with a chin strap, which I wore when I was playing outside. I loved dirt and anything resembling boots. I wanted to wear galoshes every day. My sister used to scoff, "He doesn't know *anything* about clothes!"

We were a good-looking family, and in the car, with all the windows open, the two children in the rumble seat, and all our different-colored hair blowing in the wind, we were a fine sight.

Style won't be interesting again until more people are willing to show off on the street. Suburbs don't have streets, and city streets are perilous—but nothing is as interesting as street clothes when the wind is blowing and the sun is out, or the rain is dramatic, and everyone you pass is playing the carnal game with you. ♦

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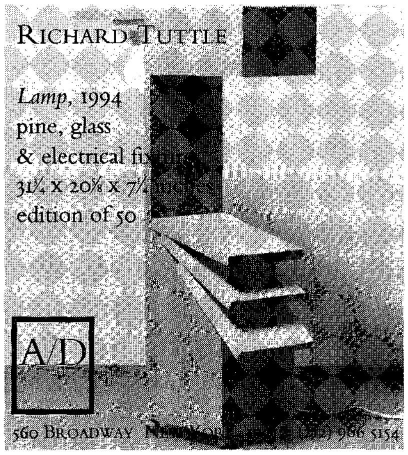

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SEVENTH AVENUE

THE MEGA MOM-AND-POP SHOP

Donna Karan, fashion's most successful woman, and her husband, Stephan Weiss, are idiosyncratic entrepreneurs, but can they keep doing it their way?

BY ARTHUR LUBOW

ON the afternoon of October 6th, the day before the world's largest DKNY store was to open, at 27 Old Bond Street in London, a few of the people who know Donna Karan well stood amid unfinished shelving and unopened cartons, engaged in a familiar activity—waiting for Donna. Patti Cohen, her close friend, and the senior vice-president of public relations for the Donna Karan Company, was there to supervise the publicity surrounding the event. Trey Laird, the creative director, was implementing the store design, which Karan and Stephan Weiss, her husband and co-chief executive officer, had fussed over on a scale model all summer. Jane Chung, a DKNY senior vice-president, who has been with Karan since 1982, was eying the clothing. Gabby Karan, a tall, slender young woman with long brown hair and a sweet manner, was taking an extended weekend away from New York University, where she is studying art and literature, to see her mother and to indulge in their favorite pastime—shopping.

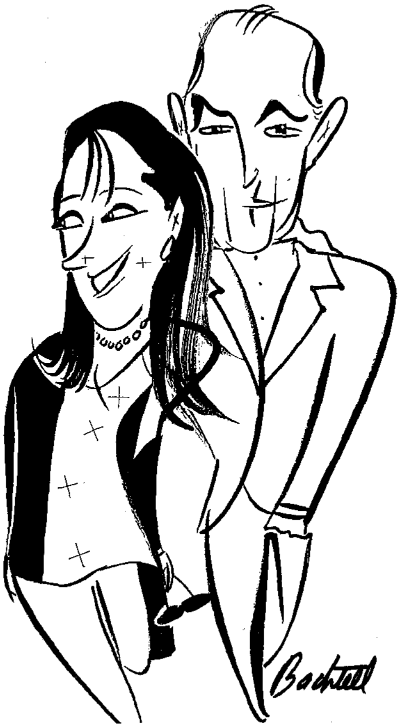
At three-thirty, Karan, coming directly from a shopping bout in Berlin, appeared outside the store. She was wearing large sunglasses, a black leather coat, black pants, and white sneakers. Her hair was arranged in bangs over her forehead and tied up in a samurai topknot in back. She was sniffling from a cold. She hugged Gabby and then, surrounded by her associates, entered the store. "It's like walking into the model," she said. But there were differences. The model was finished; the store's fourth floor and rear staircase were still under construction. Also, the model was relatively clean.

Pointing to the scuffed and soiled white floor in the store foyer, Gabby said, "I think it should be dirty. What do you think, Mommy? Do you think it should be clean?"

"Absolutely, it should be clean," Karan said. She was no longer looking at the floor, however. She was staring at the mannequins on the main three-shelf display to the left of the entrance. "None of the hats are here?" she said. "None of the evening wear? We'd better call New York immediately. Has anyone called New York? They can be on a plane. They're in Bloomingdale's. We can get them over on the Concorde."

"They don't need the Concorde," Patti Cohen said. "They can come over on the night flight that Gabby and I took."

"Can I call right now?" Karan asked. She was still in the entrance area of the store, in front of a thirty-six-monitor media wall on which videotapes of recent DKNY runway shows were playing. As she waited for the international call to go through on a mobile phone, she glanced at the monitors and then called out, "Trey? Where are you, sweetheart?" Laird, a sandy-haired man of thirty with a placid countenance, came up and assured her that the screens were programmed for large composite images as well as for the small multiple ones on display now. "What about



"I don't read small print," Karan says. Weiss does.

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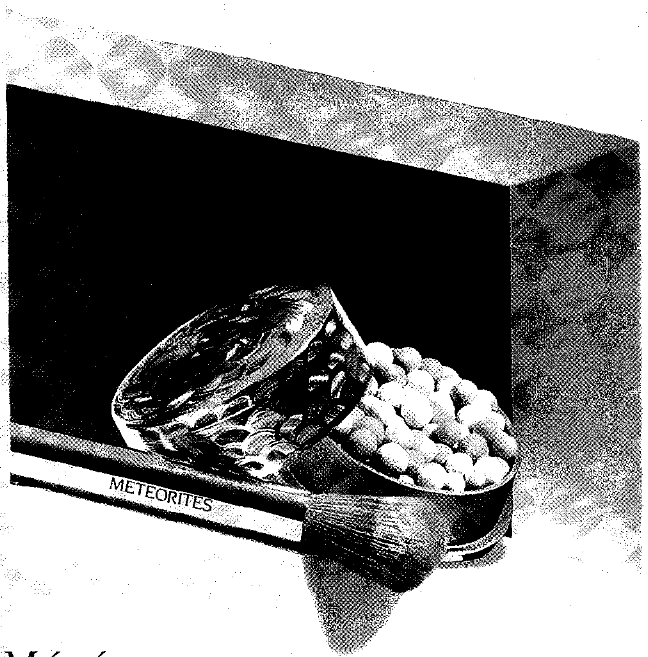

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the ticker tape?" she asked him. She had wanted a revolving electronic ticker tape, like the one in Times Square. "They didn't order the ticker tape?"

The DKNY store in London is owned not by Karan herself but by Christina Ong, a Singapore investor, whose London holdings also include the Four Seasons Hotel, the Londonderry Hotel, Bulgari, and Emporio Armani. Now, as Karan finished her call, Ong arrived to greet her. A trim, reserved, stylish woman, she was wearing an artfully frayed black five-button Comme des Garçons jacket, a white linen shirt, black leggings, and a waffled silk scarf. Accompanying her were Bernard Heng, who oversees all of Ong's European holdings, and Howe Chegne, who supervises the retail stores. They took Karan up the escalator, which rises through an enormous atrium, on a tour of the three floors of the store that were due to open at eleven the next morning. The second floor was devoted to menswear, and Karan adored it. "I'm getting the men's statement very, very strongly," she said, then added, "But I'm not getting the women's statement." Because the fourth floor wasn't ready, two floors' worth of women's merchandise had been compressed onto the third floor; strangely, the space seemed not only disorganized but understocked. The ground floor, though, was more important. Karan worried that it lacked impact.

"How many neoprene dresses do you have?" she asked Laird and Chegne. Neoprene is what scuba divers' wetsuits are made of, and the current DKNY collection features neoprene dresses with short, flared skirts in hot colors like pink and green. "I wanted to make a great neoprene statement, like we had at Bloomingdale's," she said. But the store had only three or four of the quirky dresses. (Later, Karan explained to me, "You've got to excite someone coming into the store. That neoprene dress sells the gray wool-crêpe pant. It's what says hello.") Unable to make a neoprene statement, Karan stood on the ground floor pulling on her nose and chewing on her fingers. "On the women's end, I'm missing the brights," she said.

"We have to be at the hotel at twenty to six," Cohen reminded her. It was five-ten. Karan was to present an award that night at the British Fashion Awards dinner, and a rehearsal was scheduled for six-forty-five. Cohen had arranged for hair and makeup stylists to come by the hotel at four-thirty, but she hadn't really believed that Karan would be there.

"I'm wondering if, when you walk in, you should see all black or all brights," Karan said. As she spoke, she automatically brushed a bit of lint off a red suit on a mannequin. She walked outside and looked at the mannequins in the window, who toted briefcases and were dressed sedately. "Oh, a gray-suit statement," she said. "I've got it." Back inside, she pointed to the main display and said, "I think it should all be men's suitings, grays and blues." She gestured toward a space deeper into the store. "Then all the color up here—tartans, brights, yellows, things like that. The taxicab feeling."

She did another walk through the store. "You know what I'm missing?" she asked. "Bright-colored sweaters for women." Reflecting on a mannequin, she remarked, "I think all this leather downtown wear can go in the back."

It was almost five-thirty. "Maybe you want to come back later?" Cohen said. "We should go get ready for the dinner."

"I definitely want to come back," Karan said. "I want to excuse myself in the middle of the dinner and get out of there and come back."

As she was steered toward the exit, she said, "I just don't have that feeling. I'm missing the New York energy."

UNLIKE so many fashion designers, who drape veils over their humble origins, heterodox sexual orientations, unexceptional looks, and any other messy personal details that might disfigure the fantasy they are selling, Donna Karan grounded her image from the start in who she was: a working mother (of Gabrielle) with a far from perfect body (too wide in the hips) who wanted to dress as attractively, comfortably, and *quickly* as possible. When she launched the Donna Karan New York collection, in 1985, she offered clothing (black bodysuits, wraparound skirts, cashmere sweaters) that filled a need. Her clothes were functional as well as fashionable. They were feminine without being tarty. She used luxurious materials like cashmere to make sensible clothing that would last longer than one season. Karan prided herself on providing what her customers wanted, and the customers responded. The Donna Karan Company

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was a success from the start, but its great breakthrough came in 1989, with the inauguration of a lower-priced line called DKNY. There was nothing remarkable about a designer's offering high-priced luxury goods and then, powered by snob appeal, sailing downmarket. Karan herself, in her prior career, as a designer for Anne Klein & Company, had introduced a less pricey Anne Klein II collection. But the method had always been simply to present cheaper versions of the originals—so that Anne Klein II, for instance, consisted, like the original Anne Klein, of women's business suits. What was remarkable about DKNY was that it offered a completely different line of clothing (jeans, T-shirts, trenchcoats) that could be worn by the same woman who bought from the Donna Karan New York collection. An immediate hit, DKNY now accounts for more than two-thirds of the company's sales, and it has engendered a rich spawn of rivals (CK, G, A / X).

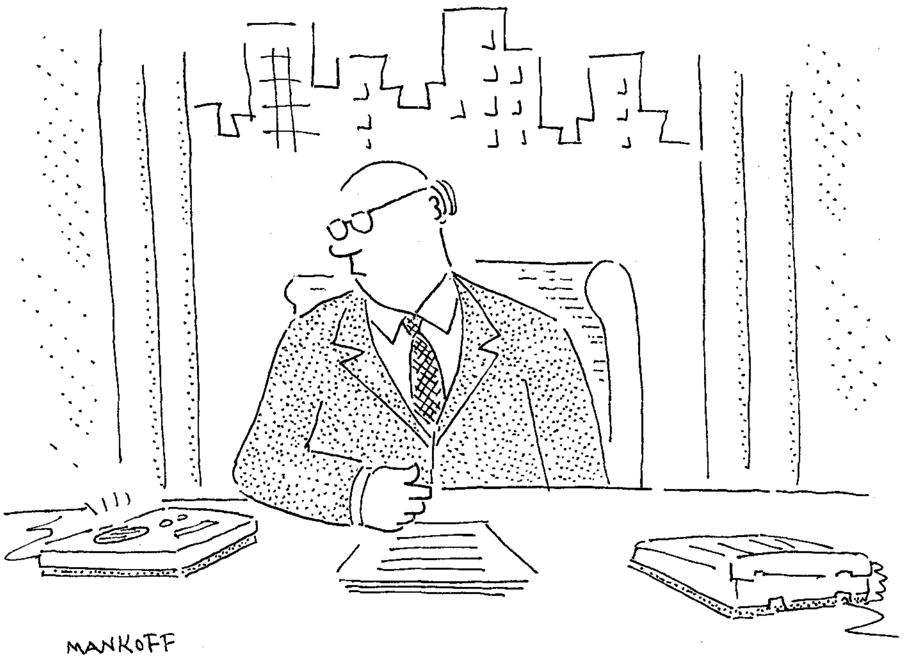
As the world's best-known woman designer and the creator of the chief American fashion house to emerge in the last ten years, Karan is accustomed to flattering press. When I met her and Weiss in New York in mid-September, however, the co-chief executives were recovering from a succession of critical articles. After a decade of achievement, the company had grown so big that the financial question of how to sustain growth was overshadowing the aesthetic assessment of this year's clothing designs. The trouble began a year ago, when the company abruptly withdrew an initial public offering because of a lukewarm reception on Wall Street. (Had it gone through, Karan and Weiss would have reaped a cash windfall of $44.5 million.) It was a bad season for retailers, and the company's most recent sales figures did not meet expectations. To proceed with the stock offering, the Weisses and their partners, Tomio Taki and Frank Mori, of the Takihyo Company, would have had to accept a lower valuation of the business than the four hundred million dollars they had set on it. They decided instead to postpone the offering. In the aftermath, the everyday problems that have always afflicted the company and are endemic to Seventh Avenue—late deliveries, uneven production quality, cash shortages—were suddenly news.

"The agenda of the financial press is a hundred and eighty degrees different from the institutional press," Weiss said to me, as Karan nodded in agreement. "Their agenda is finding chinks in everybody's armor. Their agenda is finding someone who's a hero and destroying them. What the financial press did to us in the last year and a half, couched in rumor and misinformation, was . . ."

"Disheartening," Karan said.

"Disheartening," Weiss concurred.

"People come over to you out of the



"Sir, while you were out the baby-doll dress came into fashion, went out of fashion, and came back with a vengeance."

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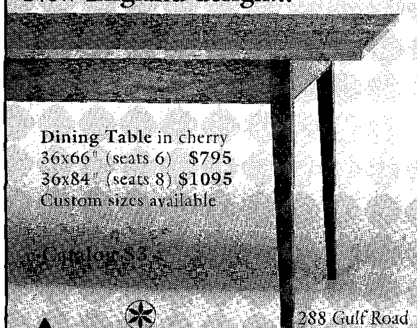

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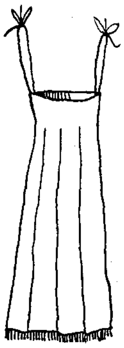
woodwork and say, 'How *are* you?' " Karan said. "I'm fine. The clothes are fine. I'm doing fine. They're attuned to something I'm not even aware of."

The decision to take the company public had been prompted by the desire of the Takihyo partners to cash out of the business that they had spurred Karan into creating in late 1984. Taki and Mori had previously employed Karan at Anne Klein, which they own entirely. They currently own half of the Donna Karan Company, and the Weisses own the other half. Mori told me that he and Taki have reached an age (Mori is fifty-four, Taki is fifty-nine) where they want to do new things. Although he is far too discreet to say so, people around him report that one of the new things he cheerfully anticipates is getting away from Weiss. The unusual move two and a half years ago to start an in-house beauty division, which Weiss heads, exacerbated the differences between the conservative Takihyo partners and the Weisses. "I don't think I'm Frank's favorite person," Weiss told me.



Weiss is a handsome, broad-shouldered, fifty-six-year-old man who wears a foot-long silver-gray ponytail. He views himself primarily as a sculptor and painter; and his wife, who is ten years his junior, regards him that way, too. "Does Stephan look like a guy who wants to run a beauty business?" Karan said angrily at one point, when I inquired if Weiss had asked for the position. The remark baffled me (what does a guy who wants to run a beauty company look like?) until I remembered the ponytail and thought, No, Stephan looks the way they both want him to look—like an artist. It's a source of tension in Weiss's life that although he doesn't register on the art scene, he is, thanks to his wife, a big deal in the fashion business. When he took me to see his paintings and sculptures, in the studio he rents in Long Island City, he had the driver park the limousine a block away. "It embarrasses me," he said. His tickets to the original Woodstock festival were hanging framed on the studio wall. "My work is really about my life," he said. "It's about finding an order in chaos." Of his counterlife on Seventh Avenue, he said, "I see business as a soft abstract sculpture. All of the pieces are moving around—it's human beings. It's tremendously creative as long as you don't get linear about it."

Both Weiss and Karan (who was born Donna Faske) grew up in the prosperous patch of suburban Long Island that is known as the Five Towns. She was a tailor's daughter; his family owned a theatrical-scenery business. When they were introduced, in 1967, he was married but separated from his wife. Donna, an eighteen-year-old Parsons School of Design student, was working on Seventh Avenue and was engaged to another Five Towns boy—Mark Karan, a clothing-boutique owner. Stephan and Donna had a brief romance, until Weiss, thinking of his young son and daughter, returned home. Donna cancelled her wedding, and then, changing her mind again, married Mark Karan.

Shortly after Anne Klein's death, in 1974, Donna Karan was appointed chief designer of the house. In 1976, unhappy in her marriage, she mentioned to a mutual friend that she would be interested in hearing from Weiss. By that time, he was divorced. "I drifted socially for a number of years, dating from the head sheets of the model agencies," Weiss says. "I wanted to be married. I made a clinical decision that I wanted to look back into my past for somebody I had history with, who had a place in my past, who had interests parallel to mine." Soon after their reintroduction, Karan left her husband and moved in with Weiss. "She was a gawky child and Steve was gorgeous," says someone who knows them well. "She was completely besotted with him from the first day." In 1983, they were married.

A year later, during negotiations that preceded the launch of her company, Karan became convinced that Weiss possessed considerable business acumen. "I don't read small print," she says. Weiss did. Because Karan was too preoccupied with designing her collections to oversee the business, he pored over the company's contracts with one motive: to protect his wife. "I guess all little girls look for a daddy, someone to take care of them, someone to protect them," Karan says. "When they choose a husband, they're looking for some of the same things." And when Karan was seeking a business partner, she was after a similar sheltering embrace. She might have teamed up with a strong and independent entrepre-

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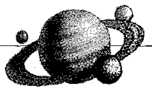

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neur—someone like Barry Schwartz, who saw to it that Calvin Klein abandoned his in-house fragrance company once losses grew too high. Instead, she is paired with someone whose mission, in his words, is "to secure her dream and move it forward." Although the alliance certainly pleases her, it invites skepticism from outsiders. Alan Millstein, an industry analyst who publishes the *Fashion Network Report*, praises Karan as "the only world-class woman designer this country has developed" but thinks that Weiss is "perhaps her Achilles' heel, because he's in some areas where he may not have as much expertise as he should."

Weiss's previous business experience had come primarily at his family's scenery company, with interruptions (whenever he couldn't bear working for his father and uncle) to sell life insurance or market whirlpool baths and saunas or manufacture Plexiglas furniture. "I had to learn the garment business, the vocabulary of it, the math of it," he says. Since he was on call for, as he puts it, "plugging leaks and damage repair," he would become visible at the Karan office during crises and then recede. "At some point in the process, I became not so enamored of solving problems," he said. "The role I was drifting into was an operations role. Creative and operational are antagonistic roles. I needed to find a different position within the company." The fiefdoms he has claimed are licensing, legal affairs, new business ventures, and the beauty-products division.

Weiss is a quick study, and the prologue to the initial public offering was his crash course in high finance. Michael Tarnopol, a Bear, Stearns investment banker, who led the team, told me, "We have been incredibly impressed with Steve Weiss's learning curve of this industry, with his grasp of it today compared to where he was when we first started." Whenever outsiders wonder if the Donna Karan Company is too big to run as a mom-and-pop shop, Karan becomes irate. "Stephan was the best one to do what he did," she told me. "Why should I hire somebody? I feel confident that Stephan will protect me. Anyone else I could have hired would have his own agenda." As evidence, she can point to a recent unpleasantness. Last March, the company hired a chief financial officer, David Golden, from the American division of Hugo Boss. Six weeks

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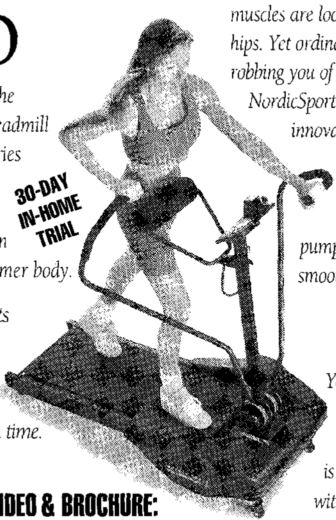

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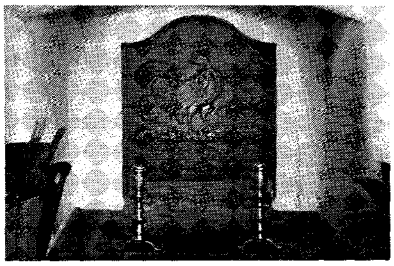

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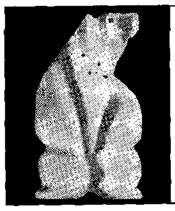

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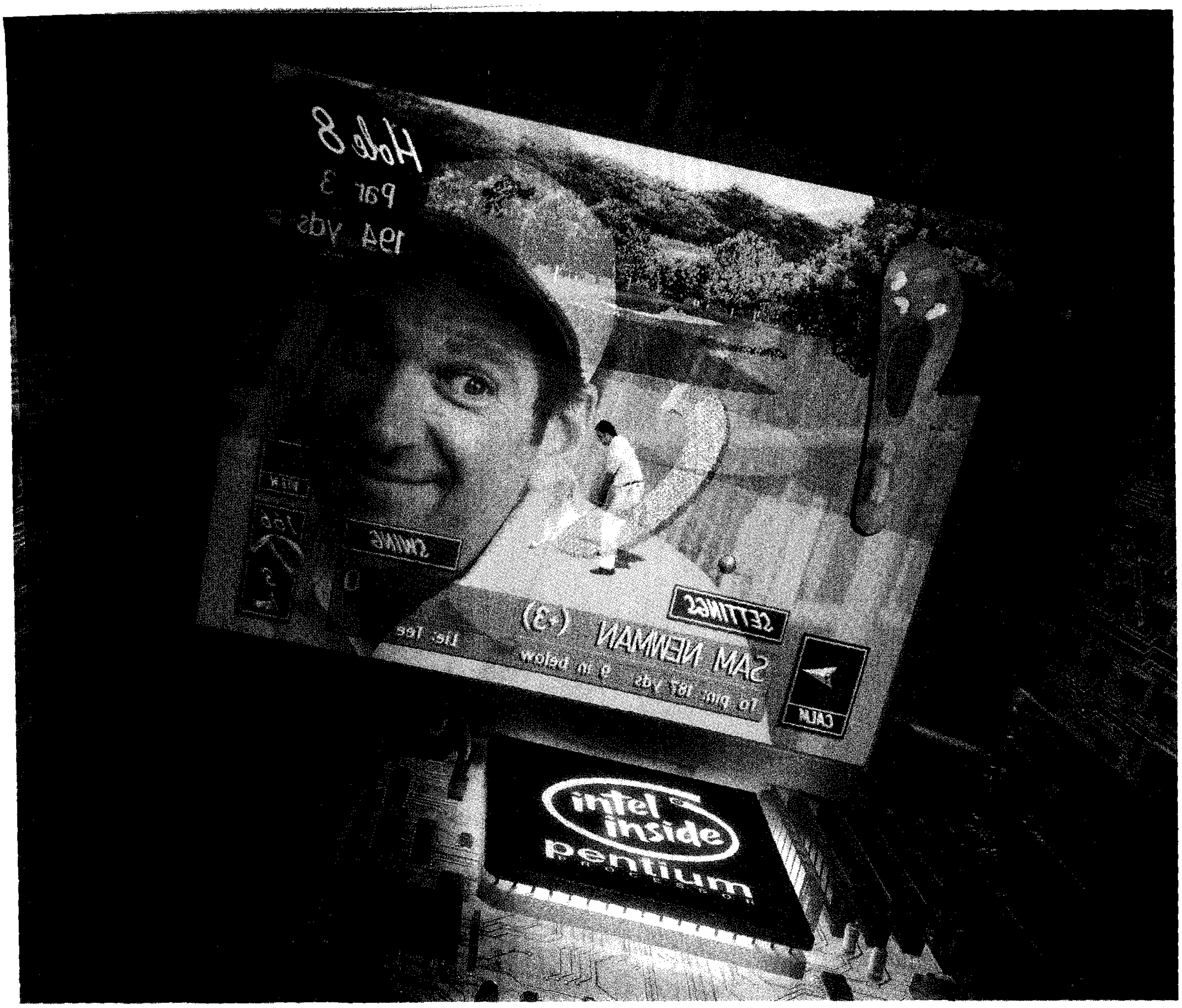

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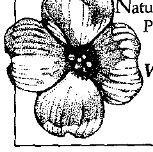

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later, he was fired. The company charges him with negligence; Golden, in a countersuit, maintains that he disobeyed orders to lie to lenders about the company's financial state. Although each side denies the other's charges, and the facts remain shrouded in litigation, one thing is clear: for Karan, the Golden fiasco was a perfect example of what can go wrong when you start to relinquish personal control.

AT 11:50 P.M., Karan was back at the Bond Street store, having come straight from the awards dinner, wearing a sulfur-yellow jacket over a black lace bodice and a black skirt. She greeted everyone and then walked out to reexamine the dummies in the window. "I wish we had something fanciful to put on their heads instead of hats," she said. "Like a newspaper. What if we wrapped a *Wall Street Journal* around them?" Laird set the window dressers to work.

Karan made her way through the store. "I think it looks so much better," she reassured Laird. She stopped at the back of the ground floor to make a suggestion. "I just feel I could use yellow over here," she said. "I don't know why. It's screaming for yellow." Chegne appeared. "I think you all did such a wonderful job," she told him. "I want to buy. It says, 'Buy me!' " After Chegne left to direct his troops, Karan proceeded to the third floor, where she found Jane Chung dressing dummies.

"We need help downstairs," Karan said. "It's not the dummies. It's the merchandise. Everywhere else you go, you feel there's stock. You're able to buy. I just feel it's barren there."

Ong and Chegne joined them.

"What do you think's going to happen tomorrow?" Karan asked.

"I think we'll have fun," Chegne said politely.

"Will they buy?" Karan asked.

Gabby, who had been fighting back sleep on the sidelines, suddenly noticed something. "Are you wearing *stockings*?" she asked her mother. Instead of her trademark thick black tights, which flatter a post-adolescent woman's legs, Karan was wearing nude-looking stockings.

"Yeah, it's a moment," Karan said. "We were so late. Don't worry, you'll never see it again."

Turning to Chung, Karan said, "There's a mannequin at the top of the escalator. I want more yellow. Yellow's very important."

"Red is what's selling," Chung said.

"I like yellow," Karan said. "Can I just borrow that yellow belt-bag for a moment? It needs to pop." She moved the mannequin, lurching under the weight in her black evening pumps. She started dressing it. "What's important is your first impact when you get off the escalator."

An hour and a half later, Chung was having sporadic coughing fits, Laird was limping from a back spasm, and Karan was still dressing and moving mannequins. Gabby announced that she was going back to the hotel to sleep. After she left, Laird came upstairs. "I've run out of ideas of things to put down there," he said. "We have seas of shelves."

"We're going to put more mannequins there," Karan said.

"That's not enough," Laird said. They went downstairs. "We got T-shirts there and newspapers," he said, "but I think it's a little junky-looking."

"Can I say something?" Karan interjected. "It's ten to two in the morning. Is something missing?" The right-hand corner by the entrance had been designated as a site for a coffee bar. Cohen had told me earlier that Karan imagined the store as "not only a place to shop but a place to hang out." The bar was scheduled to arrive by truck about midnight. Tubing and wires dangled from the ceiling in anticipation. The foreman, glum and silent, confirmed that there was no way to make contact with the trucker. Chegne was summoned, and he in turn fetched Heng.

"I think when the bar comes we should all have a drink," Heng said.

Karan walked over to the side of the room that was missing the coffee bar and picked up a menu. She shook her head. "Howe!" she called out. "I think we have a little problem here." Near the top of the menu she read, "Bagel with cream cheese and lox/pastrami." She explained that a bagel with cream cheese and pastrami is a problem. She smiled ruefully. "Whoa!" she said. "That's called eclectic!"

She went up to the foreman. "Can I ask you a dumb question?" she said. "Where is the bar coming from?" The bar was coming from Canterbury, about fifty miles away, and was to have left at ten. Karan went outside with Laird to look at the mannequins, which now had furled New York newspapers in place of

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heads. "I think the window looks superb," she said. "Maybe it needs a shot of color? Just an element?" Laird told her that some traffic signs that were being shipped overnight from New York would do the job.

"The bar's not coming," Karan said. "You know that. Let's be cool about it." They went back inside. "We need Plan No. 2," she told her team. She paused for a few seconds. "I know what," she said. "No, this is sick. You know the people who sell on the street? A vender. Is there any way to get one here? I think just bringing a vender cart in here would be very funny." An employee promised to lasso a vender early the next morning if the bar had not arrived.

As Karan moved to the back of the store, pulling out stock from under the counter which she thought should be on display, Cohen said to Chung, "She's not going home. It's two o'clock."

"Please take her home," Chung said.

KARAN can be farcically impractical: heading off to Europe with no money in her pocket, forgetting what floor her hotel room is on, fumbling helplessly with the lock. When it comes to what she considers important, however, she is monomaniacal. On the morning that she gave birth to Gabby, she called a neighbor who was a fellow-executive at Anne Klein and asked him to take her notes to the office. "She's an extremely strong-willed individual," Weiss said. "If I say, 'Make a right turn here,' and she doesn't want to make a right turn, she's not making it." Because he is responsible for business strategy, Weiss has been attacked for decisions that were ultimately Karan's: the company's short-lived attempt to design children's clothes, the costly and so far unprofitable move into menswear, and the development of a cosmetics and fragrance business. However, it may be that without Weiss to champion her unorthodox approaches, Karan would take fewer gambles.

The decision by Karan and Weiss to build a beauty division in-house flouted industry wisdom and distressed their Takihyo partners. A designer who ventures into the beauty business ordinarily concentrates on fragrances and licenses the line to one of a handful of giant perfume firms. Without shouldering any of the start-up costs, the designer collects a

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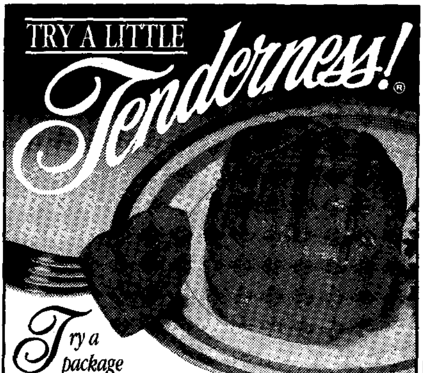

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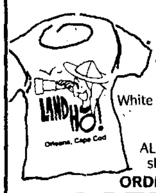

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royalty (typically about five per cent) and draws large, if less quantifiable, benefits from the perfume firm's hugely expensive ad campaign (about twenty million dollars, say, to advertise and promote Calvin Klein's new and quick-selling fragrance, cK One). It is income without financial risk. With in-house manufacture, on the other hand, the risk is enormous. Anne Klein, among others, tried, without success, to develop an in-house fragrance company. But Karan, who had loathed many of the licensed goods that bore the Anne Klein logo, didn't want to surrender personal control. She says that she was far more interested in skin-treatment products than she was in perfumes, and that none of the potential licensees would gratify those ambitions. Weiss supported her, arguing that steady income from a beauty division would buffer the company from the vicissitudes of fashion.

The Donna Karan Company partnership agreement requires unanimity for new ventures, and the Takihyo partners were extremely skeptical about starting an in-house beauty division. "We're a damned good hockey team, but beauty cosmetics is football," Mori said to me. "I thought, Why don't we get someone who knows about football to run it? I don't think it's a business that we're particularly good at." After goading Weiss into reducing the start-up costs, the Takihyo partners finally acceded to the beauty division.

Karan and Weiss say that Taki and Mori have rarely interfered in the business, and that their leaving the board once the company goes public would not cause problems. Some observers disagree. Millstein, of the *Fashion Network Report*, says of the Takihyo partners, "They're brilliant. If your board of directors is peopled by someone as shrewd as Taki, and someone like Mori, why would you want to declare war on that kind of partner? Taki has more messages from designers desperate for his expertise—it looks like the Yellow Pages, his callback list." Millstein snipes at Karan's insistence on keeping so much product development in-house. "Child's wear, menswear, the fragrance business—she thinks she's Golda Meir," he says. "She's gonna bake cookies in the kitchen and also run a war machine." Like many industry analysts, Millstein believes that Karan's hands-on vigilance helped to put her company where it is today but may now be tripping it up.

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It took Karan and Weiss five years to approve a formula for their first beauty product, Donna Karan New York Parfum. Weiss would bring vials of the "juice" home for doctoring. When Karan thought the mix needed a citrus note, he added grapefruit essence. Cosimo Policastro, a fragrance specialist at International Flavors & Fragrances, told me, "I gave Stephan pipettes, and he would call and say, 'I added a hundred drops of this material, five drops of that material.' Designers will come in and evaluate the fragrances, but I've never had anyone come in and work from the ground up in the lab." In addition to revising the scent, Weiss, at Karan's urging, also designed the bottles of the fragrance line. They are black and gold-plated recyclable plastic (except the glass bottle for the high-priced perfume), in abstract forms that would be familiar to anyone who knows Weiss's sculptures but are puzzling, if not risible, to others. At Arnell/Bickford Associates, which designed Karan's Everywoman marketing campaign, the model-shop craftsmen who created the packaging for the bottle dubbed Weiss's handiwork "the alien penis."

The division lost $4.9 million in the 1992 fiscal year; Weiss says that it will show a profit next year. The company reports that in the carefully selected stores in which the fragrance is offered it is selling very well. "It does O.K. for a brand that's not highly advertised," Allan Mottus, who publishes a cosmetics-industry newsletter called *The Informationist*, says. "The question is: How far will the name leverage it across the country?"

What also remains to be seen is whether the company can afford to sink capital into a beauty division at a time when its other divisions are growing rapidly. A co-C.E.O. who wasn't married to the designer would probably—like Schwartz at Calvin Klein—have thought not. Karan and Weiss are finding that, while the company has prospered because of Karan's ceaseless attention to design and detail, once a business reaches a certain size the demands change, and the hunger for more capital becomes ferocious. Calvin Klein and Ralph Lauren rely heavily on licensing fees but still sold parts of their companies recently to raise capital. By severely limiting her licensing, Karan has cranked up the financial pressure. "She wanted her name on any product only when anything 'passed inspection' with her taste level," Julius Stern, an executive vice-president of the company, who has worked with her since her Anne Klein days, told me. "She's a perfectionist. These qualities are good, and they can be bad." I asked how they can be bad. "A perfectionist will not follow through on a timetable," he said. He explained that when a company is starting out and shipments are small, delayed deliveries can be rushed through. Once the company is big, lateness can't be corrected, leaving the stores short on stock and the company short on revenue. At the beginning, any misstep is less embarrassing. But Karan is now so celebrated that her every move is scrutinized. "Once you hit as a top name in the industry, you can't fall down," Stern said. "You have to keep it going. It's like a top actor—you can't have a bad movie. That's the stress."

At 10:57 A.M. on October 7th, three minutes before the opening of the London store, Karan returns. The polishers have whitened the floors. The bar, which arrived at four-thirty, is now piled with pretzels, muffins, croissants, and bagel crisps. Waiters pour Spanish sparkling wine into champagne glasses. Ong is wearing a black jacket from the Donna Karan New York collection. Karan is in a black leather coat and a black dress, with one black sweater wrapped around her shoulders and another around her waist. Although she didn't leave the store until five-thirty this morning, she is buzzing with energy. She calls Chegne to the entrance; moments later, he and an assistant are rolling up a giant DKNY doormat. As soon as the first customers drift in, Karan sets about helping them try on the clothes. An hour later, when Laird appears, she hugs him.

"It looks great, really great," she says. She walks away, but a few minutes later she comes up to him again. "Honey, it's a little skimpy at the bar," she says. "The pretzels are thin. We need big New York pretzels."

She is summoned to take a phone call. It is Gabby, who is awake and wants to go shopping. Karan asks someone for a list of suitable stores and dispatches a car to fetch her daughter. She returns to Laird. "Don't you think we need the music to go up more?" she asks.

"Louder?"

"I think louder," Karan says. "And more up." ♦

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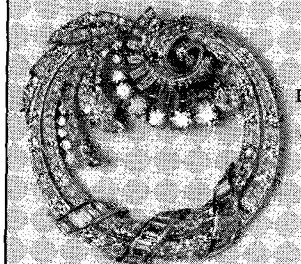

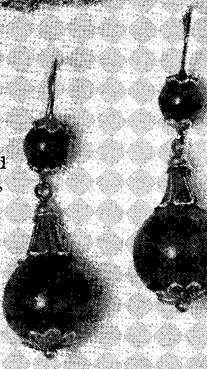

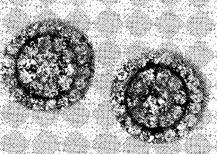

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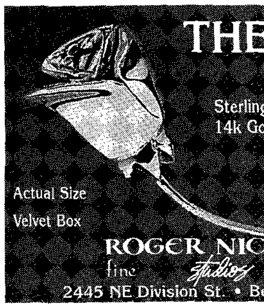

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ANNALS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

THE RETURN OF GUY BOURDIN

He was fashion's most innovative voyeur. Then his work went out of style, and he was forgotten. Now a fittingly Bourdinesque revival is under way.

BY ANTHONY HADEN-GUEST

THE photograph was to show a bare white leg sticking out of profound darkness, like an apparition or a magic trick. The leg's owner, a nineteen-year-old French fashion model named Louise Despointes, waited in British *Vogue's* London studio, which was freezing cold, until the photographer was ready. Then, wrapped in plastic, she was lowered into a bathtub full of water hardly warmer than the air. Only her head and one leg protruded. "Guy never told me what he was going to do," Despointes now says.

The year was 1969 and Guy was the French photographer Guy Bourdin, who was in the middle of a remarkable career. What he did was upend a can of black enamel paint, which floated over the surface of the water, and shoot until he had his picture. When Despointes clambered out of the tub, she found the plastic had not protected her. "She was enamelled, like a saucepan," Grace Coddington, the editor on the shoot, recalls. Despointes says, "They couldn't get it off my body for days. Guy was delighted." It was probably not so much her discomfort that occasioned Bourdin's glee as the possibility that she would be prevented from working with any other photographer for some time—even in his notoriously controlling profession, Bourdin was a very controlling man. "Anyway, that wasn't the worst," Despointes says. "The worst was the pearls."

Despointes and another model had been booked for the Christmas, 1970, issue of French *Vogue*, where Bourdin was the leading photographer. He had his makeup man smear each of the models' faces with a thin film of glue, over which he scattered dozens of pearls. "Then Guy decided that he wanted to do the whole body with those pearls," Despointes says. "But he did not know that if your whole body is glued you can't breathe. And we blacked out. The editor said, 'We can't go any further. These girls will die.' And Guy was saying, 'Oh, it would be beautiful—to have them dead in bed!' " The phantom leg duly appeared in a British *Vogue* beauty book, and Despointes's face made the Christmas cover, its pearly pimpling combining a sense of the decked-out ingénue with a touch of morbid fantasy: the Guy Bourdin look.

BOURDIN, who died in March of 1991, at the age of sixty-two, is, unlike his contemporaries Richard Avedon and Helmut Newton, scarcely known to the general public; within the worlds of photography and fashion, however, he is something of a legend. When Bourdin was at his best, as in the pages of French *Vogue* or in his many ad campaigns for Charles Jourdan shoes, he managed to imbue photographs intended to sell clothing, cosmetics, and perfume with the preternatural vividness of dreams, and he did so with stunning technical virtuosity. Philippe Garner, a senior director of Sotheby's and a respected expert on fashion and commercial photography, says, "There had been nothing like him in the history of fashion photography. Irving Penn's work is infused with respect for women. There's a sexual element in Avedon, though there's a lot else going on, too. But what you see in Bourdin is a linking of the two great themes, desire and death. That's what makes the work so disturbing. It's as if he'd hijacked the medium for his own personal uses. He can be as suffocatingly intimate as Diane Arbus—you feel you have to come up for air." The photographer Albert Watson says simply, "Guy was the closest thing to a fine-art photographer that this business has produced."

In Bourdin's last years, there was a feeling that he had outlived his time; under such disparate influences as the women's movement and AIDS the fashion world had fallen out of love with photographs that hinted at decadence, ambiguous sex, and female frailty. A decade later, however, it is waifs and grunge of which the fashion world is sick. The seventies are being rifled, and references to Guy Bourdin are appearing everywhere. Robin Derrick, the art director of British *Vogue*, says that "the Guy Bourdin thing is completely about to happen, I'm totally convinced. It's the idea of content in pictures." Even Madonna recently told the *Times* that she was immersed in Bourdin's photographs from the nineteen-seventies. "They're so sick and interesting," she said. "These girls, you have to see the looks on their faces—they're really bizarre."

Yet the apotheosis of Guy Bourdin is proving as surreal as his work. The French newspaper *Libération* noted in an exasperated obituary, "Guy Bourdin does not exist. Neither in international encyclopedias of photography nor in museum collections nor in specialized book catalogues." It could have added that Bourdin refused to allow his pictures to be collected in books and that in 1985, when he was awarded a nine-thousand-dollar prize by the French Minister of Culture, he refused the prize with a barbed note. The situation has only become more confusing since his death. Nine months earlier, Bourdin had deeded his pictures to Martine Victoire, his common-law wife of seven years. The contract was signed and witnessed, but not notarized, and Samuel Bourdin, the photographer's estranged only child, contested it. The resolution was exceedingly French. Victoire got possession of the archives but Samuel Bourdin was confirmed in his *droit moral*, or moral right, which means that without his consent Victoire cannot publish, sell, or even exhibit the photographs she owns. Samuel Bourdin's claim that he owns the reproduction rights is still being disputed in court. In any case, both parties are now appealing the original ruling.

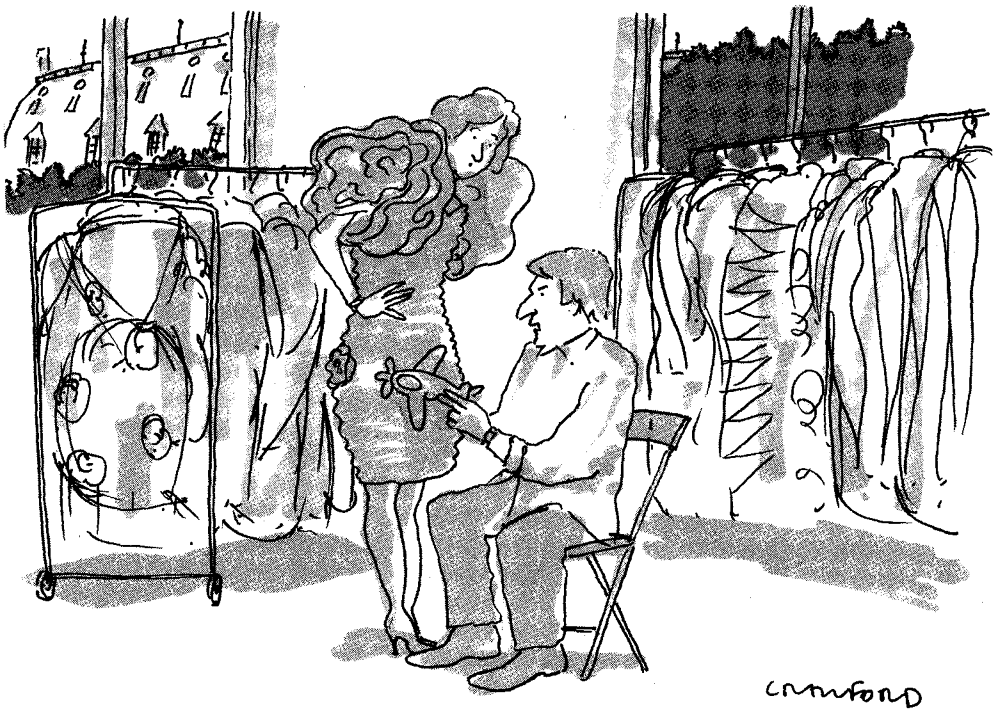
GUY BOURDIN was born in Paris on December 2, 1928. His father owned some land and three small houses on the coast of Normandy; Guy's mother left when he was an infant. He later told people that she was a redhead of Spanish stock, and that her breakup with his father had been over another man. "Guy never forgave his mother for letting him down," Michel Bourdin, his half brother, says. "He was hard with women." Guy's father married another woman and placed Guy in a boarding school. Five years later, his father's mother brought him to live in Normandy and in Paris, where the family owned a restaurant, the Brasserie Bourdin. Michel was born when Guy was fifteen; neither son got much parental warmth. Michel says of his mother, "She was in love only with my father, and he was in love with his business." Guy developed the passions of a solitary child—reading and drawing. He would sit in his grandmother's apartment or in the brasserie, sketching patrons and passersby on paper napkins.

When Bourdin was twenty, he joined the Air Force for his mandatory two years of military service, and worked as an aerial photographer in Dakar. Upon leaving the service, he decided to buy a small photography business that did wedding pictures and the like in Magny-en-Vexin, a small town close to the family compound in Normandy. His father wouldn't lend him the money, so he took a job at Bon Marché, the Paris department store. He sold camera lenses and, after hours, cleaned floors, saving up to buy photography equipment. Later, Bourdin worked as a messenger at the United States Embassy and washed dishes in the Brasserie Lipp; the whole time, he drew, painted, and took photographs.

Bourdin said that Edward Weston's work was what showed him that photographs could be art. But he learned that Man Ray, another leading American art photographer, actually lived in Paris, and he decided to pay him a visit. Bourdin's friend Jean-Jacques Naudet recalls that on six occasions in 1951 the twenty-two-year-old Bourdin banged on Man Ray's door and each time was shooed away by the artist's wife, Juliet; the seventh time, Man Ray himself answered, and invited Bourdin in.

The following year, Bourdin had a

The late Guy Bourdin (right) in 1960. "What Guy did," a colleague says, "was conduct his own psychoanalysis in Vogue."



"And, finally, I can put this charming toy plane on the dress because I am Ungaro."

show at a small gallery on the Rue de Seine. Among forty-five pictures on view was one entitled "Rayographs" and a Westonesque arrangement of a wooden table on a wooden floor. Man Ray wrote a note for the gallery's announcement which ended, "I will not say whether Guy Bourdin has anything important to show us. I don't like elegies. All the same, I can tell you that Guy Bourdin is trying with all his heart to be more than a good photographer."

In the winter of 1954, Bourdin took some of his work to French *Vogue*, and it caught the eye of Edmonde Charles-Roux, the assistant to the editor-in-chief. Bourdin was a short man with a shock of brown hair, thin lips, and a high-pitched voice. "He looked like a schoolboy," Charles-Roux recalls. She was struck by the fact that he was using an antiquated camera with a black cloth, but she was more struck by the images it had captured. "They were men and women in the nude, showing only their back and bottom, and sitting," she says. "The subject matter was extremely far from what could be of interest at *Vogue*," but the quality she found "exceptional." Bourdin immediately landed his first assignment: a fashion spread on hats.

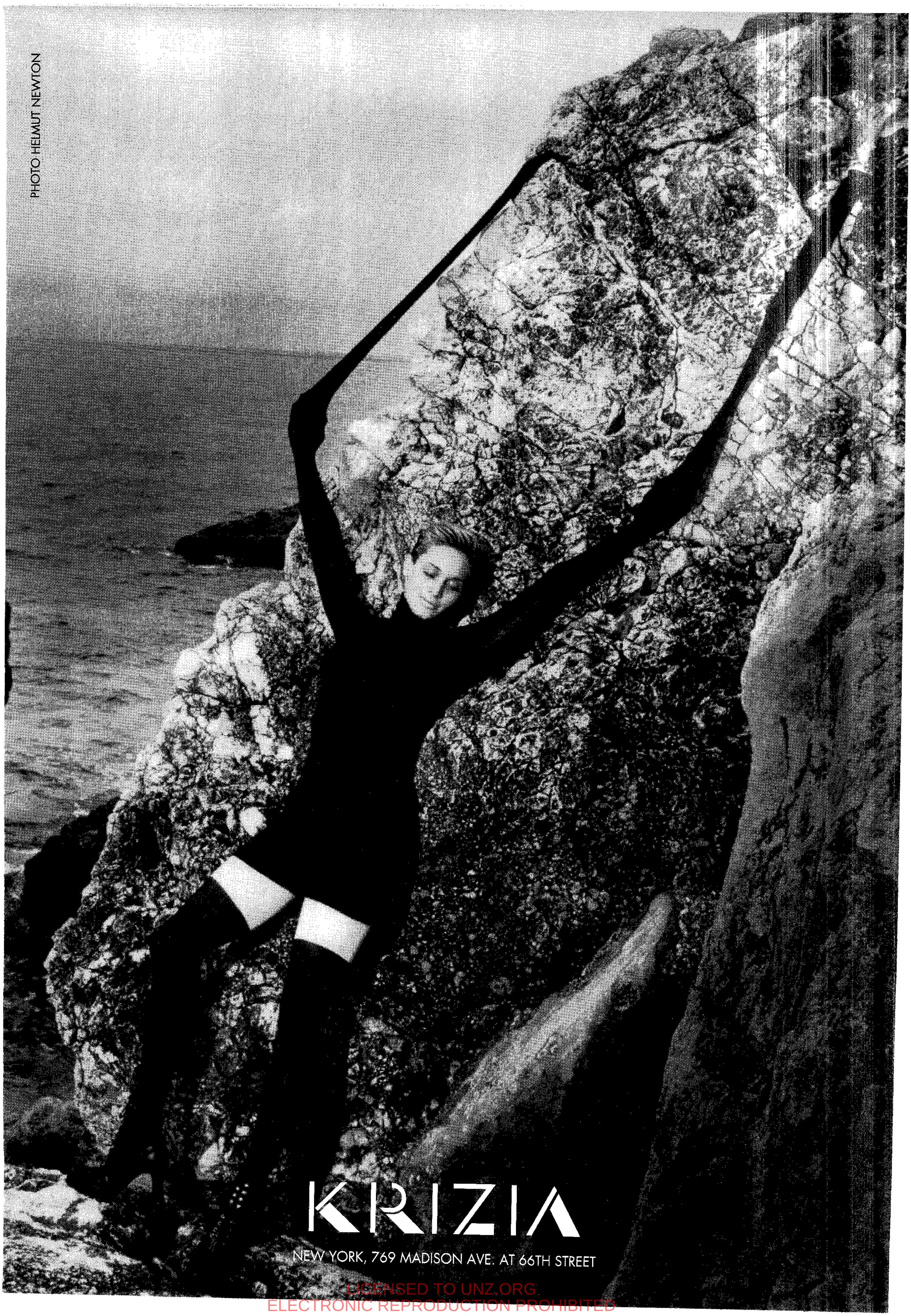
IT was, given Bourdin's propensities, good timing. The postwar hunger for luxury had permeated fashion, and French *Vogue* was home to such coolly elegant photographers as Henry Clarke and Karen Radkai. But a new sensibility was stirring, too. Bourdin's first *Vogue* photograph was of a Balenciaga hat with a little veil. Charles-Roux recalls, "Under the *voilette* on the model's face there was a fly. Or a bee, I think. It was dead, but it looked quite alive." Bourdin shot more hat pictures in a butcher's shop, posing one model beneath three skinned calves' heads with lolling tongues.

While his approach may have been startling in the context of *Vogue* fashion, the Surrealists whom Bourdin admired would have found it far from novel. Still, in those days he saw himself as an artist making a brief detour into the commercial world. The art he made without his camera was enjoying modest success. The Paris publisher Daniel Filipacchi bought a canvas, and in December of 1956 Bourdin had a show of drawings, collages, and watercolors in New York, at a gallery on the Upper East Side. Much of this work is illustrative—moody female nudes with fleshy contours—but there were also abstract graphics, like wave patterns or bicycle-spoke motifs. Compared with his photographs, it's tame stuff; Bourdin could never accept the fact that the same obsessions he transmuted into great photography produced only mediocre art. He was always the artist manqué. Charles-Roux says of Bourdin at that time, "I think the greatest shock of his life was when he realized that he would never be anything but a photographer. He put a sort of hatred into his photography. And it became worse with the years."

In 1961, Bourdin married Solange Gèze, a secretary from the Dordogne; their wedding picture shows her as plumpish and pleasant-looking. A few years later, their son, Samuel, was born. Serge Lutens, who was Bourdin's creative stylist for seven years, from 1965 until 1972, recalls, "Guy talked about Solange—'She does this! She does that!' " He adds, "But it was as if she were *enfermée*"—walled in.

In the early sixties, when Bourdin was a dominant presence at *Vogue*, the magazine's accessories editor, Francine Crescent, brought his work to the attention of Roland Jourdan, of the shoemaking firm. Jourdan was looking for a photographer with whom to launch a new advertising campaign, and, although he was surprised when Bourdin insisted on artistic control ("I could not accept or reject what he did," Jourdan says), he was impressed by Bourdin's talent and agreed to his terms. Bourdin shot a few pictures for Jourdan in 1964 and 1965, and in 1966 he decided to shoot a campaign in New York.

DURING the sixties, advertising underwent a distinct change. Advertisements used to be dominated by the "product shot"; while the famous campaigns of the fifties had sold intangibles of class, they had also shown the merchandise. Bourdin was not alone in demystifying the object, but he was the most radical in his approach. A devoted reader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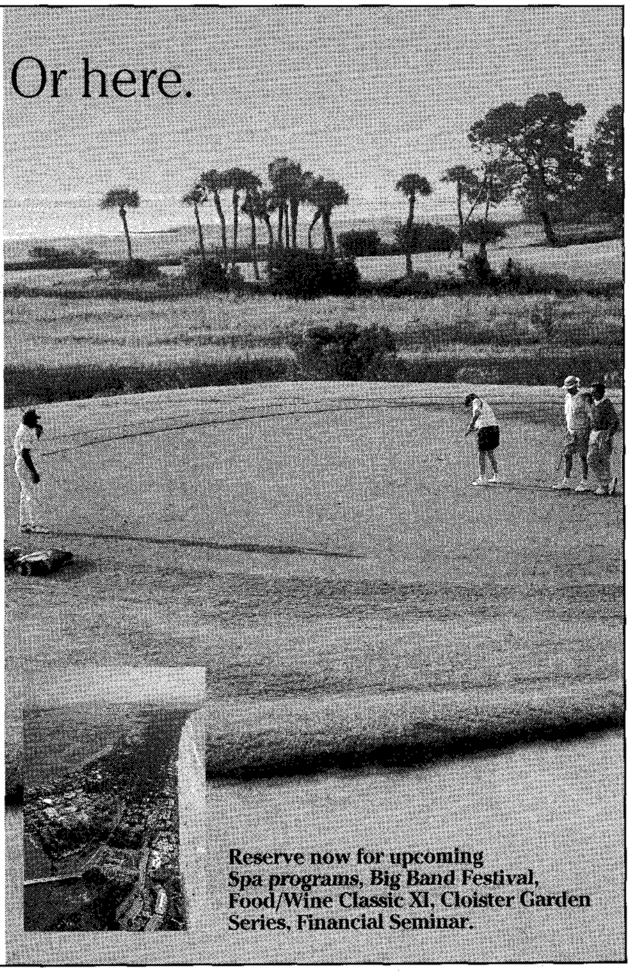

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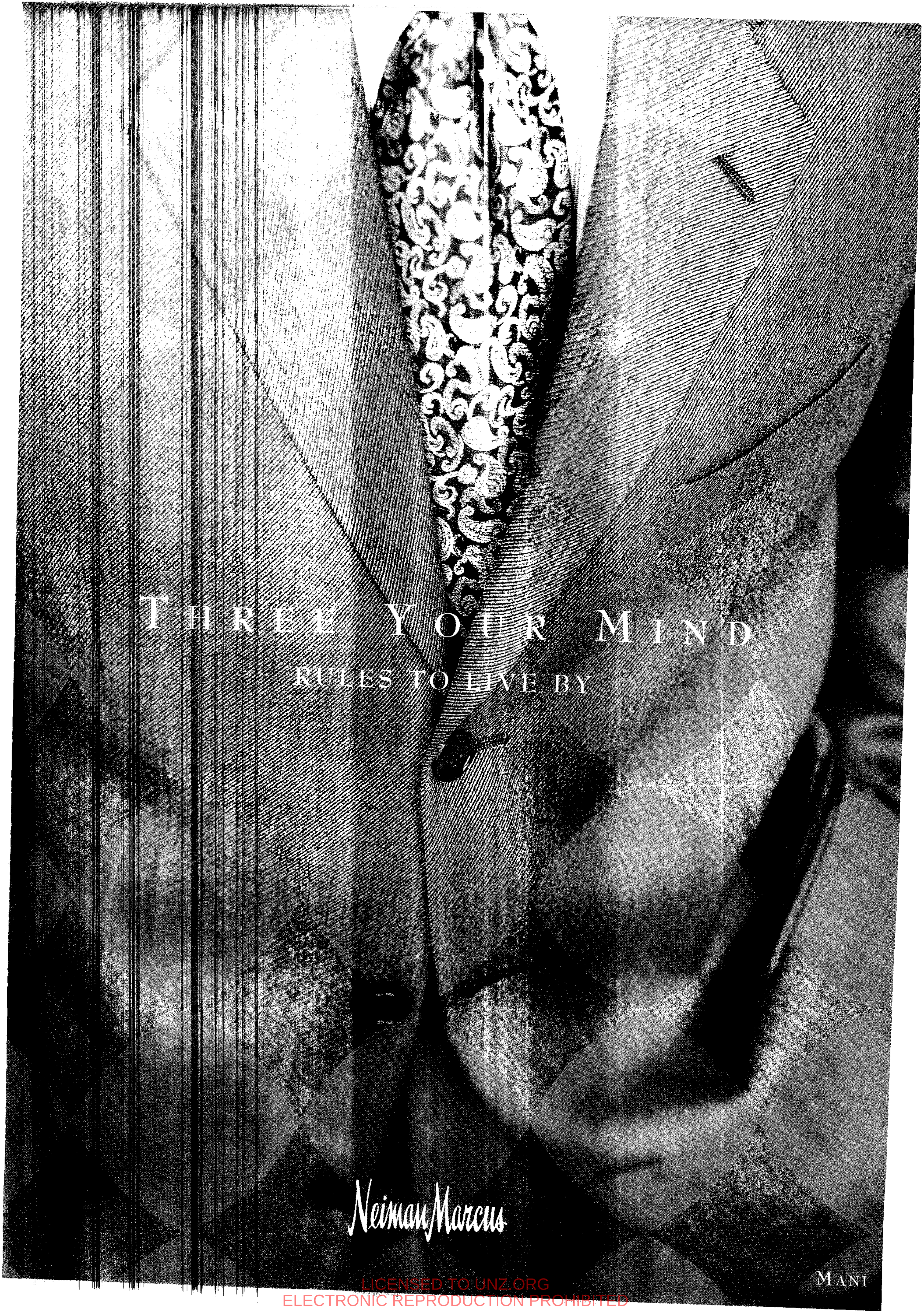
of Lewis Carroll, Bourdin demanded giant shoes for the New York shoot—not theatrical props but meticulous outsized replicas. Gérard Tavenas, who ran Jourdan's Paris office, was appalled, but went ahead and "made real shoes for giant people," as he says. He adds, "We destroyed a tree for each last."

Bourdin got his pictures. In one of them, an enormous mustard-colored shoe dwarfs a normal pair of shoes outside the door of a hotel room. In another, a young woman has stolen a huge shoe that is the ripe yellow of a New York cab and is fleeing with it in the shadow of the Brooklyn Bridge while two cops hunker down, about to open fire. A subsequent campaign, which was shot in France, used tiny shoes, held in giant fingers alongside giant beautiful faces. The campaigns created a sensation. "It was as if we were publishing not advertisements but a paperback novel or a comic strip," Tavenas says. "People were hungry to see what was next."

While in New York, Bourdin met Holly Warner, a twenty-year-old who was working for a film-production company. Bourdin spoke no English, so Warner, who had been an exchange student in Paris, was hired as an assistant and interpreter. She found the Jourdan shoot exhilarating, she says, but adds, "Guy was a very dictatorial person. He had rules that were not aligned with normal behavior." The weather was brutally cold, and she recalls buying the models foot warmers. "But they would go through anything to get a picture with Guy Bourdin. His attitude was: You're being very well paid for this. There was no human sloppiness. No whimpering or slobbering." Bourdin was also courting Warner furiously, and they started an affair. When he returned to Paris, he asked her to follow, and she did.

Bourdin left Solange and Samuel, and in time he and Warner lived together on two upper floors of a house on the Rue du Pélican, near the Louvre. Between *Vogue* and Jourdan, Bourdin was making a great deal of money, but he was always slapdash about finances. "He didn't have an accountant," Warner recalls. "It was *bordélique*"—chaotic. "He kept his pictures in shoeboxes. He would put five hundred francs in a book and forget which book."

His success didn't make him any easier on himself or on others. The single word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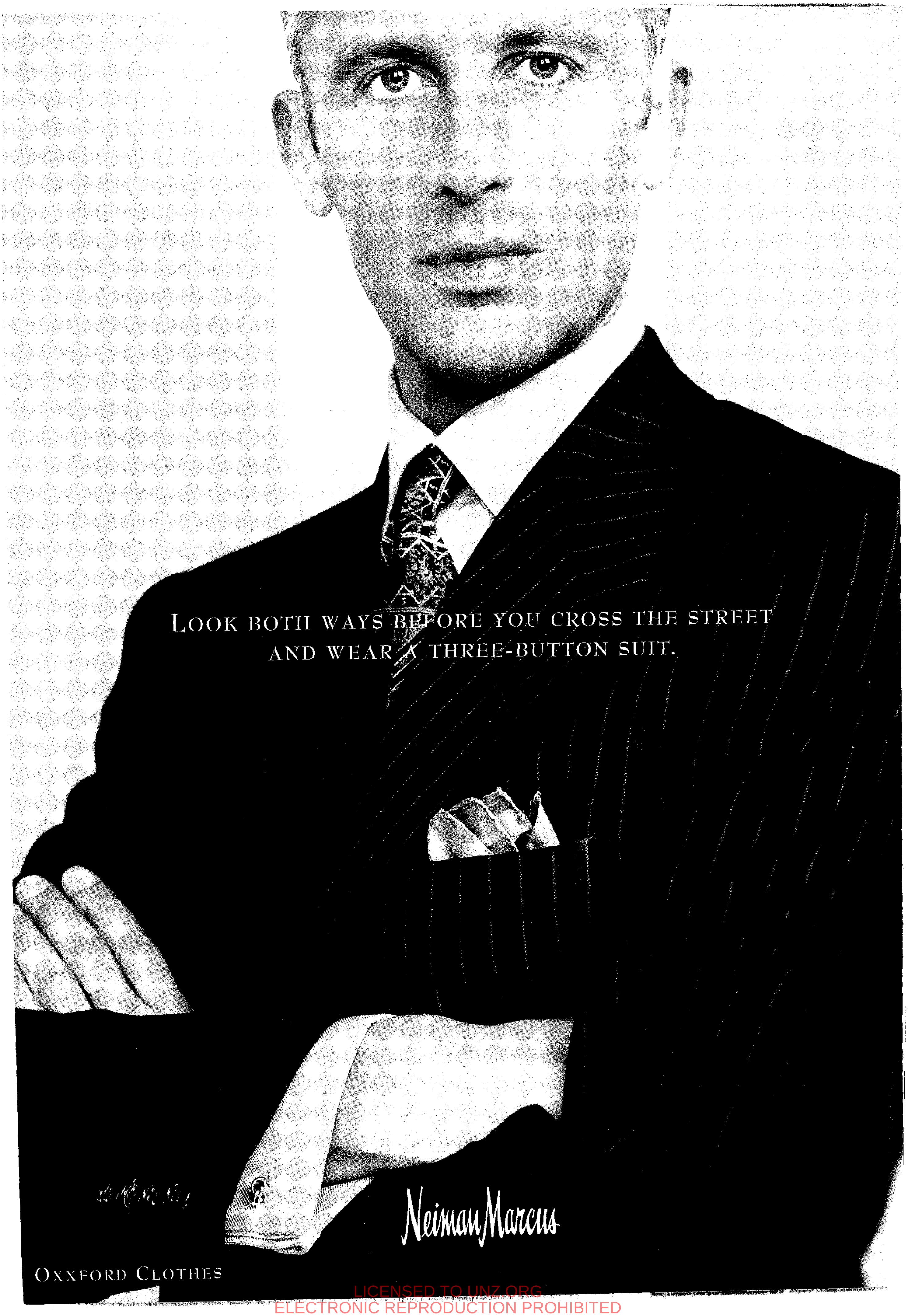
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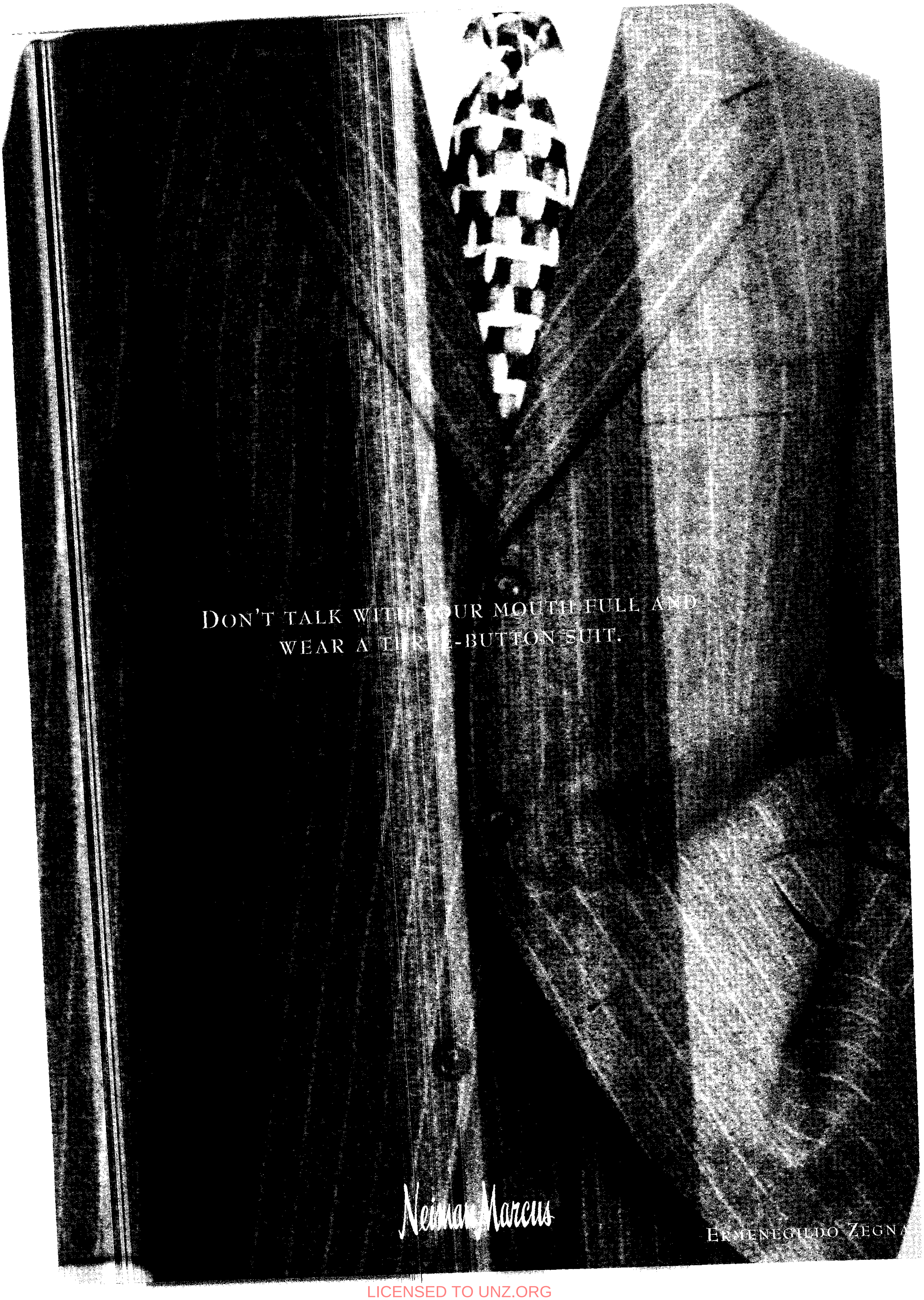
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I have heard used most frequently to describe Bourdin is "*exigeant.*" It was a time in which getting a telephone installed in Paris was tough. After several months, Warner managed to have one put in. Three times, Bourdin pulled the cord out of the wall. "He didn't want to be bothered," she says.

At French *Vogue,* Bourdin demanded and was allowed unique editorial control—another aspect of his exigency. He became ever more autocratic and quirky. Instead of presenting the editors with an array of pictures from a shoot to choose among, Francine Crescent says, "Guy brought us one photo—only the one." Bourdin often destroyed pictures he didn't use by cutting them in half. He would work out images in his notebook, and sets would be meticulously built ("A good photographer is first of all a good carpenter," he once said), but just as crucial were matters of color and lighting. His models might be lit with a wash of limpid purity, the rich glow of a summer storm, or a dreamy luminescence. He achieved such results by seemingly awkward means: sometimes he would bounce light off the outside of one of the studio umbrellas that are normally used to contain it while an assistant danced around holding aloft lights that are normally mounted on tripods.

Although Bourdin maintained a certain formality with models, addressing them almost always as "*vous,*" the experience of working with him could be unnerving. "Once he wanted a dog to be biting the bottom of my skirt," says Wallis Franken, the wife of the designer Claude Montana, who was a model for Bourdin in the early seventies. "So he sewed meat all around, which made the dog go crazy—it was biting my leg. He would do things like that to see what your reaction was." She continued to work regularly with him, even after that shoot. "I understood his sense of humor, which was very twisted but nonetheless very funny," she says. "If you reacted badly, he would push you until you cracked. But I thought he was very funny, so I would become his accomplice as far as other models were concerned. He would make them cry. We were all enlisted. We were all players."

Holly Warner accompanied Bourdin on a shoot in Normandy in 1968. The model on that occasion, Eva Gschopf, was an Austrian, with a pale, oval face and straight reddish-brown hair. Bourdin,

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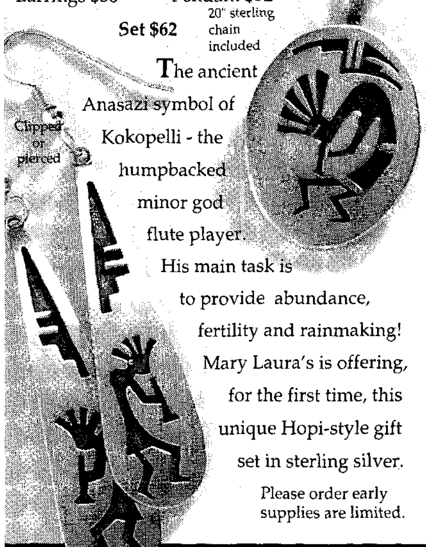

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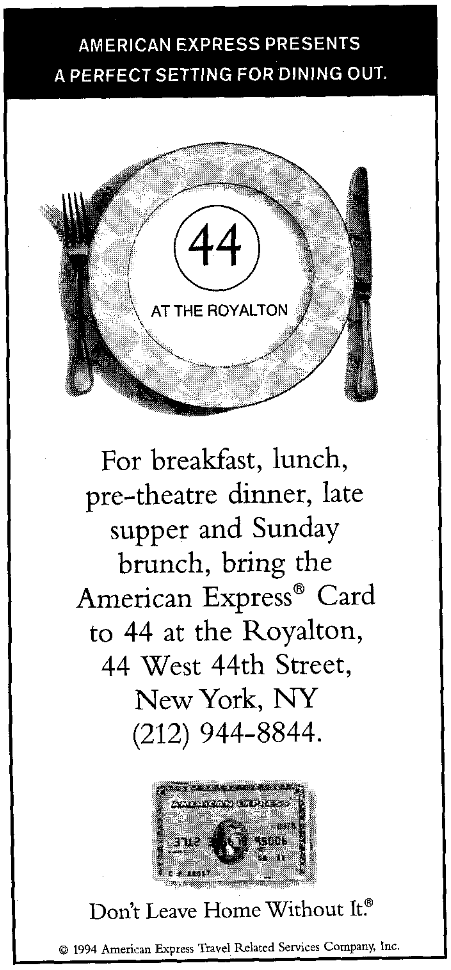
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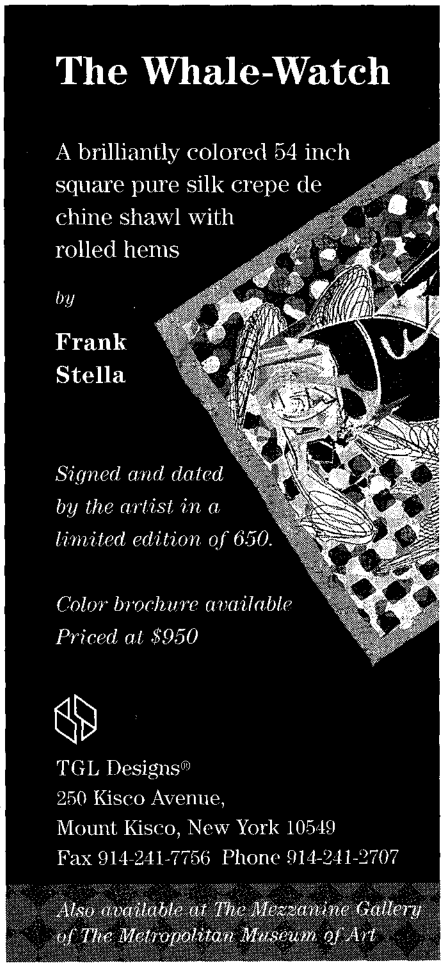
who had decided to control the real world as he controlled his studio, hauled rolls of background paper to the sea cliffs and set them up behind rocks and trees. "It would be 'How did you get that rock into the studio? Or that tree?' " Warner says. "It had never been done before. And there was Eva in a little cotton nightgown. With wind and sea coming up. Can you believe I put makeup on trees in the middle of the night? I would shimmy up with some mud and a little eyebrow pencil." Warner was distressed to see, though, that Eva was infatuated with Bourdin. Back in Paris, the situation grew increasingly intolerable—at one point, Warner tried to kill herself by slashing her wrists—but eventually she managed to break away from Bourdin. "I'm a survivor," Warner declares. Others close to him were less fortunate.

In the summer of 1969, after Eva had pursued Bourdin for several months, she died in an accidental fall from a tree. "She jumped out of the tree because she thought she was a bird," Bourdin said when he was told. His reaction was at once unfeeling and poetic—that of a child. Soon he was living with Eva's best friend, Sybille Danner, on the Rue du Pélican. Sybille was Austrian, like Eva, whom she much resembled, down to the color of her hair. A few weeks after they moved in together, Solange Bourdin, Guy's estranged wife, who had been running an antique store in Normandy, died. Some of Bourdin's friends say she died of an overdose of pills. Others, perhaps wishing to free him of a terrible burden, insist that it was cardiac arrest.

Bourdin rarely spoke of deaths that touched him, but he seems to have felt that death, like carnal desire, could be transmuted into an imaginative resource. Even so, it is dismaying to hear from his friend Jean-Jacques Naudet that one Bourdin photograph, showing a woman lying supine in bed, is a reconstruction of the death of Solange. That is not obvious from the image. In fact, the picture worked perfectly well as an ad for Charles Jourdan.

SYBILLE was a kindhearted woman, and had Samuel brought from his grandparents in Normandy to live in Paris. Joan Juliet Buck, the editor of French *Vogue*, who briefly worked for Bourdin as a stylist, recalls the warmth and closeness of life at Rue du Pélican: family and friends gathered for bibulous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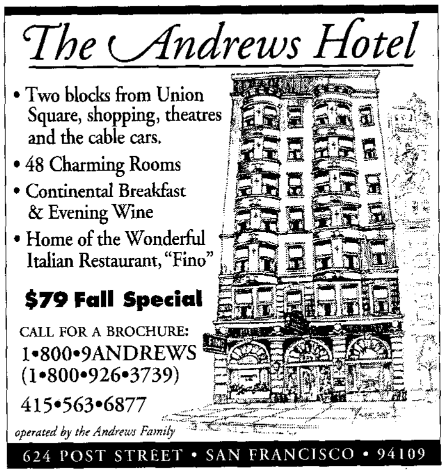
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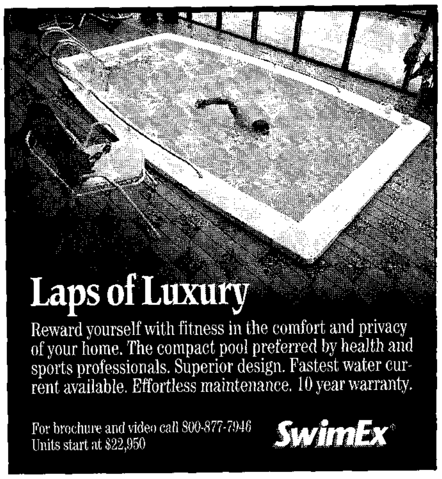
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dinners, with Sybille "kind of housewifey" and Bourdin cutting salami very precisely on a red-and-white checked oilcloth on the kitchen table.

The seventies were a productive time for Bourdin. His shoots grew in complexity, and he worked at some images repeatedly, as with one that might be called the Water Nymph. One attempt at it began as a simple shot for British *Vogue* of a model swimming naked. "But Bourdin decided the water wasn't blue enough," Grace Coddington says. "So he tried to dye the sea blue. But every time we got it blue enough a wave came in and washed it out again. We were trying stronger and stronger dyes. So he decided to have the girl flying over the water. He built a trestle. But the tide came in, and it collapsed. We cancelled the shoot. It cost us a lot of money."

"Spiderwoman," a setup he tried with Susan Moncur, an American model, and three others, was even more elaborate. Three models were to be arranged so that only their splayed legs would be visible, topped by the head of a fourth; the six spider feet were to be sporting Charles Jourdan shoes. The contraption that supported the women was awkward and cut into their flesh. "He started taking the pictures," Moncur says. "And he was saying, 'Oh! *Ce n'est pas bien.* It's not going to work!' Here we are, suffering, in pain, and he was saying, 'This is awful!' I was getting really angry. I said, *'You are a sadist!'* I really screeched it out. He was very hurt. He stopped the picture. He refused to go on." She adds wistfully, "My career with Guy Bourdin was finished."

There was, however, a method to Bourdin's heedlessness. Masochism and narcissism pervade the fashion world, and from them Guy Bourdin, toting his own psychological burdens, distilled images of unsettling beauty. "What Guy did," Serge Lutens says, "was conduct his own psychoanalysis in *Vogue.*" In the photographs of the sixties, formal qualities still predominate, and the models even smile from time to time. From the seventies on, as Bourdin's stature and power grew, the models seem increasingly lost in dream landscapes; when they do glance in the viewer's direction, they seem as snarly or remote as animals in cages. The few men generally seem to represent caprice or menace.

There are parallels to be drawn between the work of Bourdin and that of

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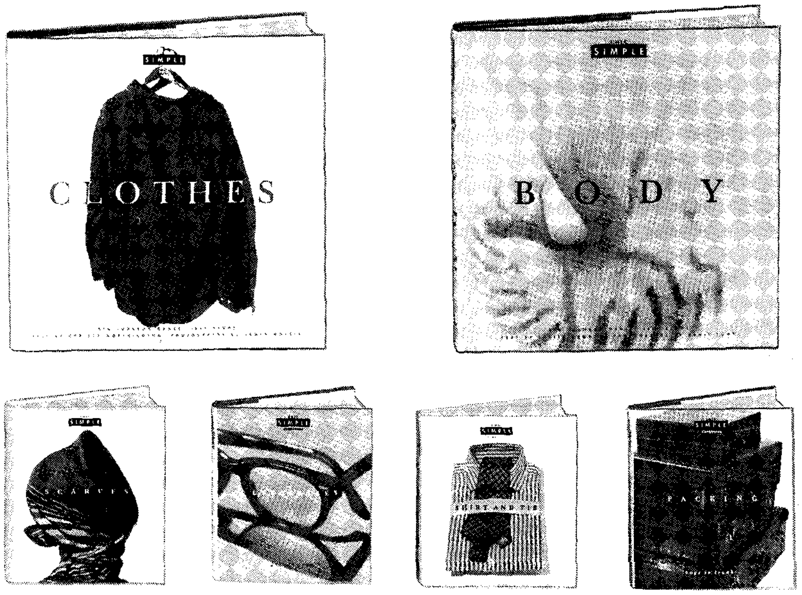

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Helmut Newton, but Newton has a film-noir sensibility, where Bourdin creates an eroticized fairy-tale world. Newton's pantherine models play in opulent settings, where Bourdin prefers such venues as bathrooms and shabby-genteel hotel rooms. "If there was an enormous hotel, and in it there was a cupboard that stank and was two inches square, that's where he would take the picture," the British photographer Terence Donovan told me. He added, "He's the only photographer I've ever seen work that I couldn't figure out what he was doing." Joe Eula, the well-known fashion illustrator, says that Bourdin had "a rubber lens."

In his best period, a spread of Bourdin's fashion pictures would be rich with implicit narrative. Sometimes there was an enchanting playfulness, as when five small girls, thickly made up with lipstick and mascara, lie in a bed beneath the sign "Occupancy by more than 2 persons is dangerous and unlawful." Sometimes he returned to old-fashioned French-farce naughtiness, involving mistresses and housemaids. But the most memorable photographs have an impenetrable strangeness. One picture shows an anguished woman in a phone booth with one hand pressed against the glass. In the foreground are the legs of two women lying on mounds of dirt, their torsos covered with newspaper. Behind them is a dark, folkloric forest.

At times, a sort of overbearing devilry threw off the delicate balance of Bourdin's work, as when he photographed four female models, naked, each with a single anthurium leaf gripped between her thighs. The anthurium is heart-shaped, blood-red, and big enough to cover the pubes, and has a pronglike spadix several inches long. This was schoolboy stuff. So was a shot he got when he had a model support herself on the floor on her shoulders, with her back rising straight up and her head tucked invisibly to her chest. He then had her pull her legs down, so that all the eye and the lens saw was a naked back topped by the contours of the behind. In this pose, the model was transformed into an erect penis. According to Joan Juliet Buck, Bourdin managed to get this Duchampian pun published twice in France—once in an advertisement for bath gel—and tried (without success) to get it into *Harper's Bazaar*.

Usually, though, Bourdin's excesses were those of morbidity. Alexis Stroukoff, a French *Vogue* photographer who worked as Bourdin's assistant in 1977, recalls a shoot in Normandy where the model was required to hold a slab of liver: "It was very hot. Of course, there were many, many flies." Stroukoff also recalls a picture that Bourdin took for a record album showing a girl urinating on a photograph of John Travolta. At a dinner party in 1979, Bourdin told the assembled guests that he wanted to photograph bodies in a morgue and rephotograph them at weekly intervals over the course of a year to record the progress of decay.

The morgue sessions never happened, and a lot of the darker pictures that Bourdin did take were never published. One such unpublished photograph, taken for the magazine *Stern* in 1978, showed a naked woman draped across her desk, her throat cut, surrounded by blood.

MICHEL BOURDIN, Guy's half brother, and his wife, Mireille, had cordial relations with Guy and Sybille. They would go to parties in Guy's studio, and the two families would sometimes summer together in Normandy. Over time, however, the younger couple found the atmosphere increasingly claustrophobic; it was, they recall, as if Guy were using up all the air. "In the end," Mireille says, "I wanted to burn down the house." After 1978, they never went back. "Guy told us we were right to leave," Mireille says.

But Sybille couldn't leave. Isi Veleris, an old friend of Guy Bourdin's, recalls that Sybille "could never even go outside"—that "the Rue du Pélican was Guy's château fort." Mireille Bourdin says, "Sybille was very lively. Then, at the end, Sybille was like Solange."

Other troubles beset the household. In the late seventies, for the first time, advertising photographers were required to pay a value-added tax, which they were supposed to exact from their clients and then remit to the state. "My father thought he was more than a commercial photographer," Samuel Bourdin says, and he therefore refused to comply. "When I was twelve years old the *fisc*"—short for *l'administration fiscale*, the tax-collection agency—"took a sofa. They took my record-player."

The days of entertaining, of big dinners, were largely over; the family ate sparingly. One morning in 1981, Samuel, then thirteen, was making his way home from school. More than a decade later, I walked with Samuel, who is as thin-lipped as his father, and is pale, guarded, and intensely changeable, up the Rue du Pélican as he described what happened when he reached the house that day. "I tried to open the door," he said. "I couldn't open it all the way. It was on a burglar lock, a chain." After a pause, he said, "I had a vision. I saw her hanging there." Sybille had committed suicide, and it was not a decision made on the spur of the moment; she had previously taken her Irish setter to Austria. "Guy

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said that she did it purposely to annoy him," Mireille Bourdin says. Soon afterward, Samuel was sent to school in the United States. In the mid-eighties, Susan Moncur ran into Bourdin at a fashion show. "I had had champagne and so had he," she says. "And he explained to me about Sybille's death. It was very intimate, as if all of a sudden he wanted to tell her story. As if he were excusing himself. I think he might have felt a little bit jinxed."

The year after Sybille's suicide, Bourdin walked into the tax office, denounced the officials as Nazis, and stripped naked. He was thrown in jail. The publisher Daniel Filipacchi and *Vogue* paid to get him out. "You should have let me stay there," he complained upon emerging. "How wonderful to spend a whole year in prison. Just reading." Guy began to cut himself off from many of the people in his life, among them Michel and Mireille Bourdin and Gérard Tavenas, of Jourdan, who says, "I felt he wanted to break with the past."

MARTINE VICTOIRE, an attractive young black woman from Martinique who worked as a pharmacist's assistant, was introduced to Guy Bourdin in the mid-eighties by a friend who worked as a *mannequin de charme*—a term denoting the modelling not of couture but of lingerie and less. He invited both women to pose for him in Normandy. "It was the best holiday of my life," Victoire says. "Guy cooked *rognons* and fish. We were his guests."

Victoire wore a raffia skirt for most of the shots, which were, as she puts it, "*à l'africaine*." She returned to Paris and waited. He finally called at the year's end. The shots hadn't worked, he told her apologetically. But he did come to dinner, bringing orchids and Godiva chocolates. And, Victoire says, "we were together forever after."

As the eighties wore on, however, Bourdin began to face professional reverses. Francine Crescent left *Vogue* in 1987. "It was a shock for Guy," she says. "We were his family. The new team asked him to do some photos. They accepted only two or three, I think." Bourdin was crushed. For the first time, he was being treated like an ordinary commercial photographer—worse, a photographer whose vision was out of date and whose talent was fading. "In the end, it was always too much the same," Jean Poniatowski, who was then French *Vogue's* publisher, says. "Of course, he was sick at the time. That's when the edge started going out of the photographs." Alexis Stroukoff recalls that Bourdin had started complaining of stomach pains in 1988 and was found to have cancer in 1989. He continued to work occasionally, but his late photographs lack his old sense of quirky life; his models look not like dolls but like dummies.

One Saturday in March of 1991, Bourdin called Victoire to say that he was in the hospital. At his request, she brought paper and pencils, and he drew feverishly. On another of her visits, he was in a delirium, taking imaginary pictures. "*Ces mannequins sont tartes*," he said. "These models are useless. Martine, I asked for Fujichrome, not Ektachrome!"

Victoire was with Bourdin on the eve of his death, on March 29th, but Samuel Bourdin, who had arrived from America, made it clear that she would be unwelcome at the funeral. Michel and Mireille Bourdin, who had learned of the death only from television, had a chilly greeting from Samuel. A few friends who knew Martine Victoire supported her in her battle with Samuel over the archive of Guy's photographic œuvre.

Today, the Bourdin revival is in full blaze, but his ghost is as *exigeant* as ever. For even if Samuel and Martine do reach an understanding, other problems await them. Bourdin died owing the French government hefty back taxes, and cataloguing and organizing the archive—which, according to one close friend, is now held in fifty-three bags and cardboard boxes—will be a very expensive process. And photographic archives are notoriously delicate. "If the transparencies are not housed in a place where the temperature is stable, dust and fungus can destroy them," the inspector general of photography for France's Ministry of Culture says. "I think it's very sad. But I think it's also kind of in the mood of Bourdin's world." ♦

Calvin Klein

PROFILE

THE WORLD OF CARMEL SNOW

The greatest moment of fashion magazines was the Harper's Bazaar edited by Carmel Snow, a woman who called on the likes of Salvador Dali, Carson McCullers, Walker Evans, Diana Vreeland, and the revolutionary art director Alexey Brodovitch to create a publication for "the well-dressed woman and the well-dressed mind."

BY CALVIN TOMKINS

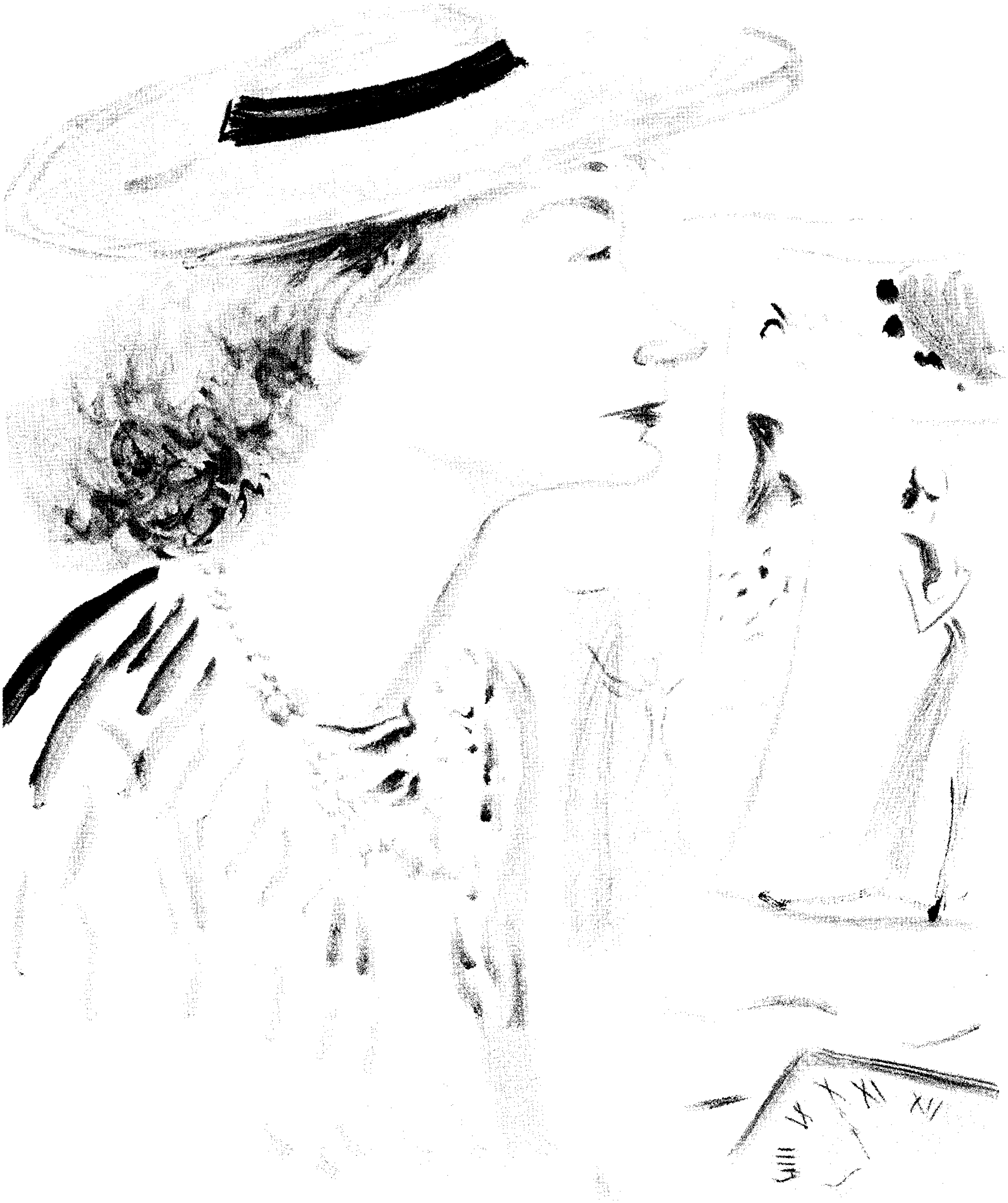
SHE was born in a big house on the outskirts of Dublin—her friends often mentioned that when they talked about Carmel Snow. Ireland seemed to have a lot to do with the way she looked (even when she was past forty and was permanently addicted to the severe elegance of Balenciaga), and also with the way she talked, and moved, and thought. Her deep, throaty voice never lost its Irish inflection. Refusing to fasten her seat belt in airplanes, taking an intense and proprietary interest in the personal problems of the people around her, acting on sudden impulses (which she sometimes regretted), being dead sure always about what she wanted, telling stories wonderfully, and (in her later years) getting a little too fond of the bottle—all this seemed to be tied in with her Irish imagination and wit and charm. But there was something else about her—a quality that Kenneth Tynan, the British theatre critic, whom she encouraged to write for *Harper's Bazaar* when he was twenty-four, once hinted at by referring to her "lordly but intimate way . . . half Irish and half Inca." This other side of her nature was implacable and rigorous, as unyielding in its devotion to "top quality" (one of her favorite expressions) as the work of Balenciaga himself, and without it she could never have become that rarest of hybrids, a great editor.

Without it she might not have gone very far, in fact, considering the American snobocracy's bias against Irish Catholics in 1921, the year she started her magazine career, as an assistant fashion editor at *Vogue*. At that point, both *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, its considerably older rival (the third "a" in "Bazaar" didn't appear until 1929, sixty-two years after its founding), still hewed to their ancestral roles as court circulars, faithful mirrors of the Protestant upper class, in its Park Avenue apartments and its Newport mansions: they provided essential information about births, deaths, marriages, and débuts, along with decorous line drawings of the latest Paris frocks, hats, and pointed shoes. Carmel Snow knew all about the Protestant upper class. As a young girl working in her mother's custom-dressmaking shop, she had often waited on its wives and daughters—majestically proportioned women who came in two or three times a year to be fitted for their copies of the latest creations by Worth or Lanvin or Doucet. Carmel's mother, Annie White, was herself a formidably resourceful Irishwoman. Having been obliged to take over the management of the Irish Village concession at the Chicago World's Fair when her husband, with whom she had organized this showcase for Irish goods and handicrafts, died suddenly, in 1893, she had stayed on in America and prospered, at first selling Irish handicrafts in Chicago and eventually moving to New York, where she acquired control of an established dressmaking business that earned more than enough to provide for her six children (four sons, two daughters) and to install the family rather grandly in one of the first elegant apartment buildings in the city—the Navarro, on Central Park South. She sent Carmel and her older sister, Christine, to a finishing school in Brussels, and when they came back she put them to work in her shop. Carmel didn't like the work much, but she loved going with her mother to the Paris collections, where she absorbed fashion knowledge at the source and discovered that she had a virtually photographic memory for the details of couture.

Christine married young, but Carmel did not. Strikingly pretty and deceptively fragile-looking, with her slim figure and saucily upturned nose, she had no lack of admirers among her older brothers' college friends and her mother's sophisticated circle of actors and writers. She had her portrait painted by Robert Henri and learned about modern art from the artist and critic Walter Pach. For several months, she was engaged to a wealthy young Canadian named Arthur Fitzpatrick (no anti-Irish bias there), but when Arthur's mother found out that Carmel's mother was "in trade" she made him give Carmel up. Carmel joined the Red Cross during the First World War, went to Paris with it, and was eventually put in charge of all female Red Cross workers there. The work in her mother's dressmaking shop seemed far more onerous after that, and in 1921, when Condé Nast himself offered her a job at *Vogue*, she took it like a shot.

Vogue at this point was just starting to acknowledge the twentieth century. Under Condé Nast, who had bought the magazine from the family of Arthur B. Turnure in 1909, and Edna Woolman Chase, his worshipfully devoted chief editor, the magazine had opened its pages to such new developments as the growth of ready-to-wear fashions and the startlingly stripped-down, informal clothes designed by Coco Chanel. A similar awakening was under way at *Harper's Bazar*, which had been bought from Fletcher Harper in 1913 by William Randolph Hearst. *Bazar* actually published the first Chanel dress to be seen in America, in 1916, but Hearst's preferred method of competition was to plunder the staffs of rival magazines. He stole Erté, the cover artist, from the Condé Nast-owned *Gazette du Bon Ton*,

Mrs. Snow by Vertès, the Hungarian artist whose "deliciously frivolous" sketches for Bazaar set a new tone in fashion illustration.



XII
XI
X
IX
VIII

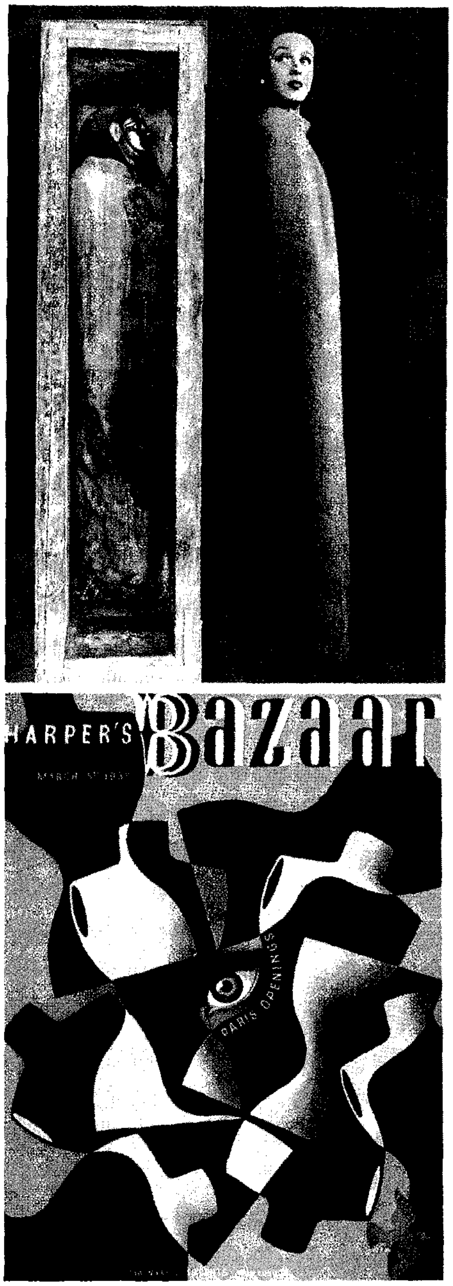
à Mrs Snow de mon ♥

N.Y. 1937

Vertès

in Paris, and the year after Carmel White joined *Vogue* he managed to lure away its leading fashion photographer, Baron Adolphe de Meyer. This turned out to be a great stroke of luck for *Vogue*, because de Meyer's misty, backlit, elaborately posed studio photographs were already starting to look out-of-date, and the man whom Nast found to replace him was Edward Steichen, one of the masters of the new, Alfred Stieglitz-inspired school of straight photography. Steichen's clean-cut pictorial realism revolutionized fashion journalism: his pictures showed the details of the clothes with greater clarity than ever before, but they also did something much more important—they presented the models who wore them as real women, fully recognizable in the present tense, rather than as dreamy creatures posed in some ethereal studio never-never land.

Carmel White established an instant rapport with Steichen, and that was her first great coup at the magazine. She became the "editor" for all his sittings, seeing to it that he got what he wanted and that his models knew what to do. "His severity never frightened me," she said. "It was all *fun*." Some people thought they were having an affair. Nast himself was so enchanted with Carmel that he took her off with him on weekends to Newport and sent her to the Adirondacks in the summer, so she would meet the wealthy and socially exalted people who still formed the backbone of *Vogue's* loyal readership. Within a few years, her boundless energy, editorial skill, and eagle eye for the best new fashion designs had made Carmel the rising star at the magazine, second only to Edna Chase in Nast's estimation; the staff used to joke that Edna was Condé's wife and Carmel was his mistress, but nobody took that seriously—Condé had enough problems with his real mistresses. In 1926, the year Carmel was named fashion editor, she married George Palen Snow, a good-looking, very rich bachelor with impeccable social credentials, a country house on Long Island's North Shore, an endearing stutter, and no real vocation of his own. Pa Snow, as his friends called him, was still comfortably ensconced in the life of a nineteenth-century country gentleman. He liked to hunt, fish, ride, and garden (his compost heap was unsurpassed), but for some reason—perhaps because he had no choice—he did not object to his wife's having a career and leading a life of her own. Since Carmel was thirty-nine when they married, they wasted no time in starting a family. The first of their three daughters, whom they named after Carmel, was born the next year. Carmel kept right on reading copy and conferring with Edna Chase and going over layouts the whole time she was in the hospital, and she returned to the office a week later, entrusting young Carmel to the care of an English nanny who would stay on for many years.



A 1938 cover by Cassandre and, at top, a 1940 portrait by Louise Dahl-Wolfe.

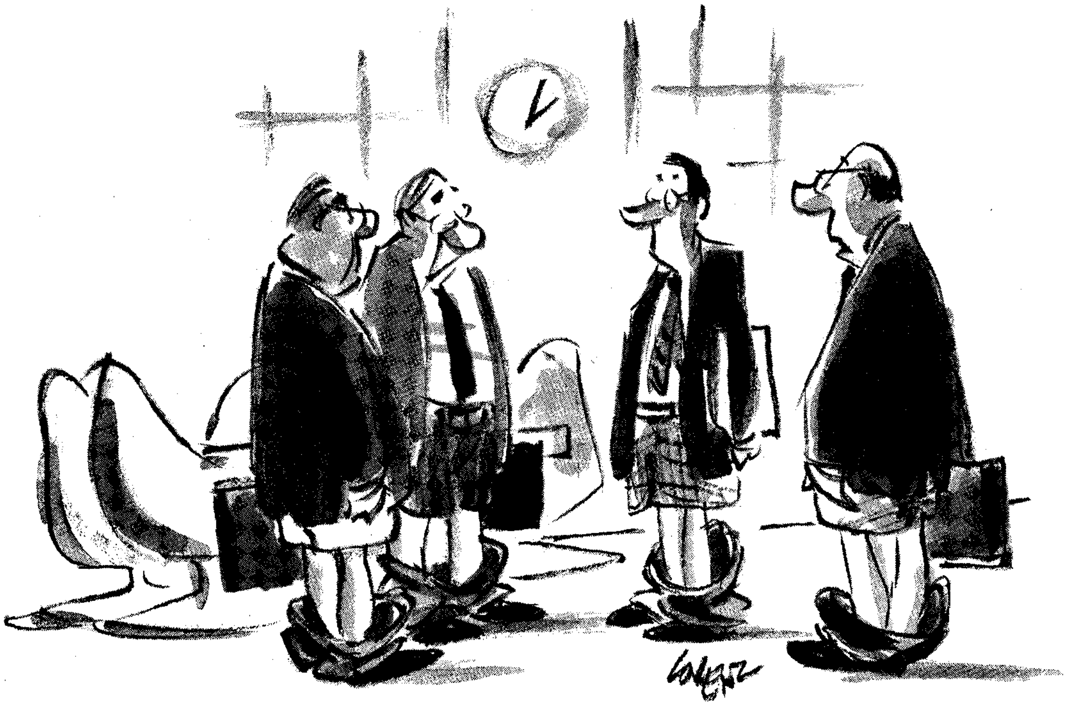
Edna Chase was not quite as enchanted with Carmel Snow as Condé Nast had always been. In fact, Carmel once said that "she seemed to criticize everything I did," so that working with her was "almost like being back under my mother's thumb." Edna Chase came from a middle-class Quaker family in Asbury Park, New Jersey, and had started work in the circulation department at *Vogue* in 1895, when she was eighteen. She became its chief editor in 1914, and, while working closely with Nast to broaden its appeal and its audience, she retained very firm ideas about the sort of material that was "right" for *Vogue* readers and the sort of behavior that was expected of its employees. *Vogue* editors wore hats in the office in those days, and Carmel Snow, who found the atmosphere there suffocatingly ladylike, sometimes struck Mrs. Chase as a little too blithe. By 1929, however, Edna Chase had become the editor-in-chief of three European editions of *Vogue* as well as the American edition; she was spending a lot of her time in Europe as a result, and, although she argued strenuously against it, she could not dissuade Condé Nast from giving Carmel the title of American editor. Nast also made it clear to Carmel that she would eventually succeed Chase as editor-in-chief—a decision that Chase agreed to at the time. Nast was uneasy when Tom White, Carmel's favorite brother, became general manager of the Hearst organization in 1929. According to Edna Chase, Nast asked Carmel at the time whether this might not bring pressure on her to go over to the rival house, but she assured him that nothing would induce her to work for Hearst.

When Carmel Snow quit *Vogue* three years later to work for *Harper's Bazaar*, both Condé Nast and Edna Chase felt mortally betrayed. Nast never spoke to her again. Only a few days earlier, he had gone to visit her in the hospital, where she was recuperating from the birth of her fourth child (in addition to their daughters, she and Palen had had a son, who died when he was two weeks old), and in later years Carmel conceded that she probably did say to him then, as he told everyone she had, "If you were to fire me today I'd be back tomorrow, I love my work so much." While she was still in the hospital, though, she was visited by Richard Berlin, the president of Hearst's magazine empire. Her own account of the proceedings is set forth in "The World of Carmel Snow," her very appealing memoir. "I honestly believed that Condé would be glad to be relieved of the burden of my salary," she states, not very believably, but then we get down to straighter stuff. Although Mrs. Chase "constantly talked about retiring, and Condé had assured me that I would succeed her, I happened to know that *she* had promised the succession to several other people, and besides, I didn't believe she had the least intention of retiring." (In fact, Chase stayed on as editor-in-chief for twenty more years.) Moreover, according to Snow, "Mrs. Chase had already proposed that I be demoted to society editor." Not surprisingly, Mrs. Chase's autobiography, "Always in Vogue," written in 1954, offers a different version of the traumatic event—a more-in-sadness-than-in-anger tale of disloyalty and bad faith. Whichever version one accepts, the dénouement suggests that Carmel Snow, when the occasion arose, was quite willing to let her lordly, Inca self have the upper hand.

THE move was a huge gamble. *Harper's Bazaar* was moribund in 1932, in spite of Hearst's periodic efforts to resuscitate it. *Vogue* had authority and cachet. *Bazaar* had serialized fiction by genteel English writers, out-of-date covers by Erté, stilted fashion drawings, Baron de Meyer's languid photographs, and gushy features on people like Mrs. Reginald Vanderbilt ("Pearls are her chosen jewels and the gardenia her favorite flower"). And Carmel Snow, who had been hired as fashion editor—at the same salary she'd been getting at *Vogue*—was not even in full command: she reported to Arthur Samuels, the editor, whose main interest was the magazine's longstanding tradition of publishing fiction. (Samuels leavened the diet of romantic serials with humorous pieces by Dorothy Parker and Anita Loos, and now and then a dollop of serious fiction by Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, or Somerset Maugham.) When Carmel tried to get rid of Erté, Samuels told her that he had a long contract, and, besides, Mr. Hearst liked him. Samuels paid very ittle attention to the art department, though, and in no time Snow had taken t over. She initiated a system of laying out the photostats of each month's pages on the floor of her office—the whole isue would take shape there on the floor, ubject to all sorts of changes and rearangements, which played havoc with orderly scheduling and drove entrenched staffers crazy. Frances McFadden, *Vogue's* smart young managing editor, had followed Snow to *Harper's Bazaar*, where she did a brilliant job of pushing through the changes that Snow wanted made. Every morning, Carmel would come in with a bagful of "scraps"—newspaper clippings, notes on new dresses she had seen, names of girls who might be hired to model them, and also memos on upcoming books and plays and other aspects of the wider culture that Snow felt her readers ought to know about. Her Irish love of literature was at work here, helped along by her exposure to the theatre people of her mother's circle (including Katherine Cornell, George S. Kaufman, and the Algonquin Round Table crowd). She wanted to find space in *Bazaar* for theatre and books and movies and the visual arts—for "everything that interests the kind of woman who reads expensive fashion magazines," as she put it. What she really meant, of course, was everything that interested Carmel Snow. There was precious little about music in her magazine, or about food, because those things didn't interest her.

Carmel Snow, seated, and art director Alexey Brodovitch, kneeling, choose layouts in 1952.

On one of her semi-annual trips to the



"Well, now that we've established that we're all wearing Tommy Hilfiger underwear, can we proceed to the substance of the meeting?"

Paris collections, she met Jean Cocteau and Christian (Bébé) Bérard, the painter and set designer, both of whom she talked into doing fashion sketches for *Harper's Bazaar*. She also signed up the ultra-fashionable Mrs. Reginald Fellowes, known as Daisy, to be *Bazaar's* Paris editor. Carmel's most important find in those early years, however, was a Hungarian news and sports photographer named Martin Munkacsi, whose work she had heard about from Steichen but had never seen. When, in November of 1933, she learned by chance that Munkacsi was in New York for a few days, she tracked him down and took him to the Piping Rock Club, on Long Island, to photograph bathing suits for the December "Palm Beach" issue, which had supposedly closed. Munkacsi, who spoke no English, and had never taken a fashion shot in his life, managed to convey through an interpreter that he wanted the shivering model to *run* toward the camera, and the pictures he took of her that day changed fashion photography as profoundly as Steichen's had a decade earlier. Soon *Bazaar's* pages were filled with young women in motion—playing golf or tennis, skating or skiing or sailing or walking in the rain. "Farm girls jumping over fences," Edna Chase sniffed, but other photographers took notice, and the 35-mm. Leica, which had been in use since 1924 for sports and news events, soon became standard equipment for fashion work.

The magazine's general look remained static and monotonous, though, until Snow pressured Hearst into hiring Alexey Brodovitch as its art director. Brodovitch was her second great discovery. Having been driven out of Russia by the Revolution, he had become a highly successful graphic designer in Paris in the nineteen-twenties, running the design studio at the elegant department store Aux Trois Quartiers and doing layouts for *Cahiers d'Art* and *Arts et Métiers Graphiques*. He had moved to the United States in 1930 to start a Department of Advertising Design at the Pennsylvania Museum School of Industrial Art. Snow saw his work for the first time in 1934, when she went to an exhibition of advertising design sponsored by the Art Directors Club in New York. She was about to be named *Bazaar's* chief editor, and she made one of her instant decisions. Within ten minutes, she had asked him to have a drink with her, and that same evening she got him to sign a contract with *Harper's Bazaar*—a contract she managed to get approved by flying to see Hearst at his castle in Wales, showing him some Brodovitch layouts, and overriding his attempts to argue that the magazine looked fine the way it was.

Alexey Brodovitch changed the look of American magazines, advertising layouts, and graphic design. His collaboration with Carmel Snow turned *Harper's Bazaar* into one of the most widely admired magazines in America, and his classes at the New School gave several generations of young designers and art directors their first insight into postwar European design concepts that stemmed from the Bauhaus, Russian Constructivism, and such modern masters as Kandinsky and Matisse. Some of the changes that Brodovitch brought to *Bazaar*, however, had already been appearing in the pages of *Vogue*. Mehemed Fehmy Agha, a Turkish-born designer whom Condé Nast hired in 1929 as art director for his three magazines (*Vogue, House & Garden*, and *Vanity Fair*), had also been trained in Bauhaus graphic-design principles. Although Agha's best work appeared in *Vanity Fair* (whose high-spirited and irreverent approach was directed mainly to New York readers), he dispensed with the neat little frames around *Vogue's* illustrations and photographs, replaced its italic typefaces and hand-drawn captions with bold sans-serif letters, tilted columns of type at a slight angle to the vertical, spread groups of photographs across a page fanwise, and, in *Vogue's* September, 1932, issue, ran the first "bleed" photograph ever to appear in an American magazine—the picture extended all the way to the edge of the page. Agha's innovations at *Vogue* were limited by Edna Chase's strict sense of what was proper, though, and his modernization there was only skin-deep Design and content remained for the most part separate and unrelated a *Vogue*, while at *Harper's Bazaar* Brodovitch and Snow were turning the editoria pages of the magazine into a unified sequence, with photographs, illustrations and text working together throughout Their goal was to give these pages a cin ematic continuity—dramatic layouts followed by relatively serene ones, medium-distance photographs played off against extreme closeups, fashion news interspersed with information about books and plays and socialites and movie stars—that would constitute a monthly run-through of popular and high culture with its own ebb and flow, cadence and rhythm. It was the first appearance of a concept that came to be widely imitated but was never surpassed: the magazine editor as auteur.

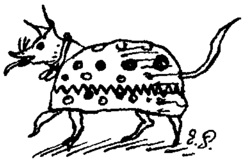
Carmel also wanted surprises. She believed in giving *Bazaar's* readers something fresh and unexpected in every issue, and as a result she was constantly on the lookout for new contributors. She found the Hungarian artist Vertès working for Schiaparelli in Paris, and his "deliciously frivolous" sketches in *Bazaar*, as she once described them, set the tone for a looser, more informal style of fashion illustration. Surrealist fashion drawings by Salvador Dali (his first), Jean Hugo, and Leonor Fini were a little too astonishing for some readers, and so were Man Ray's photographic distortions of fashion models, but that didn't deter Snow—they were part of what was going on. Two new photographers arrived as inadvertent gifts from *Vogue*. In 1935, George Hoyningen-Huene—*Vogue's* leading fashion photographer after Steichen—quit in fury because of a remark by the acerbic Dr. Agha and came straight to Carmel Snow. Louise Dahl-Wolfe had taken her portfolio first to *Vogue*, but it had been turned down by Agha, who decided, mistakenly, that she was "middle-aged" and was therefore unlikely to improve her style; Carmel saw her work and jumped at it. Hoyningen-Huene's elegant studio work and Dahl-Wolfe's pioneering use of color, alternating with Munkacsi's outdoor action shots, dominated the pages of *Harper's Bazaar* during much of the nineteen-thirties and throughout the forties, as photography gradually drove hand-drawn illustrations into retirement. A mixed bag of good writing kept the pictures from stealing the show: fiction by Evelyn Waugh, Colette, John O'Hara, Kay Boyle, Virginia Woolf, Frank O'Connor, and Gertrude Stein; poems by W. H. Auden, Edith Sitwell, Marianne Moore, E. E. Cummings, and Dylan Thomas; articles by Janet Flanner, Dorothy Parker, Wolcott Gibbs, Robert Benchley, and several other writers whose principal allegiance was to *The New Yorker*.

By 1935, the magazine seemed years—decades—younger. It had entered the youth market early, devoting the August issue each year to college fashions as well as running full-page portraits of débutantes, many photographs of well-dressed children (including Carmel's), and even, in the December, 1935, issue, an illustrated strip by Jean de Brunhoff called "Babar and Father Christmas." The staff got younger, too. Well-connected society girls yearned to work at *Bazaar*, where they were offered long hours and thirty-five dollars a week; their male chums often made yachts and stables available to them for fashion shoots. Working for Carmel was enormous fun. "She was open and friendly, and absolutely ravishing-looking, and, of course, terribly bright, and you could argue with her, but she had the final word on everything," according to Babs Simpson, who came to work there in the early nineteen-forties. "She knew exactly what she wanted the magazine to look like. We thought nothing of *Vogue* in those days. *Vogue* was for suburbia—dowdy. Mrs. Snow managed to produce a very racy magazine, more intimate and much freer than *Vogue*." The freedom was far from absolute; this was a Hearst publication, after all, and big advertisers required editorial strokings. There were also the annual portrait photographs of the employer's beloved, Marion Davies, looking younger each year, and there were some embarrassing contretemps, too, such as the time Hearst balked at running a picture of the great contralto Marian Anderson. "I won't have that nigger in my living room," he was reported to have said. The picture ran anyway. Carmel Snow was reputed to be the only person other than Marion Davies who was not afraid of Hearst. "Have you any influence with Mrs. Snow?" the great man himself inquired, in a famous memo to one of his underlings. "I KNOW I haven't."

In 1936, Carmel spotted Diana Vreeland on the dance floor of the St. Regis Hotel. "She said she'd admired what I had on—it was a white lace Chanel dress with a bolero, and I had roses in my hair—and she asked me if I'd

"That was like a zillion years before lipo."

like a job," Vreeland recalled. An international sophisticate who was married to a banker and had two sons, Vreeland became Snow's third major discovery: the greatest fashion editor of all time; a *monstre sacré*, whose fame eventually eclipsed that of her discoverer. Vreeland's "Why Don't You?" columns ("Why don't you turn your old ermine coat into a bathrobe . . . have a furry elk-lined trunk for the back of your car . . . put all your dogs in bright yellow collars and leashes") introduced a note of flamboyant absurdity that spilled over into the increasingly dictatorial fashion copy; soon *Bazaar* was instructing college girls to buy beige wool dresses that were "the color of old English sheepdogs, of phone books, of oyster stew, porridge, rye crisp, putty, or barley." This sort of thing cried out for parody, which it got from the *New Yorker* writers S. J. Perelman and Geoffrey Hellman, among others, but it also carried a message, a subtext (as the children say), which was that the people at *Harper's Bazaar* knew perfectly well that fashion was *not that serious.* "Fashion is an element mysterious as uranium and just as explosive, but light—lighter than air," Carmel Snow said.



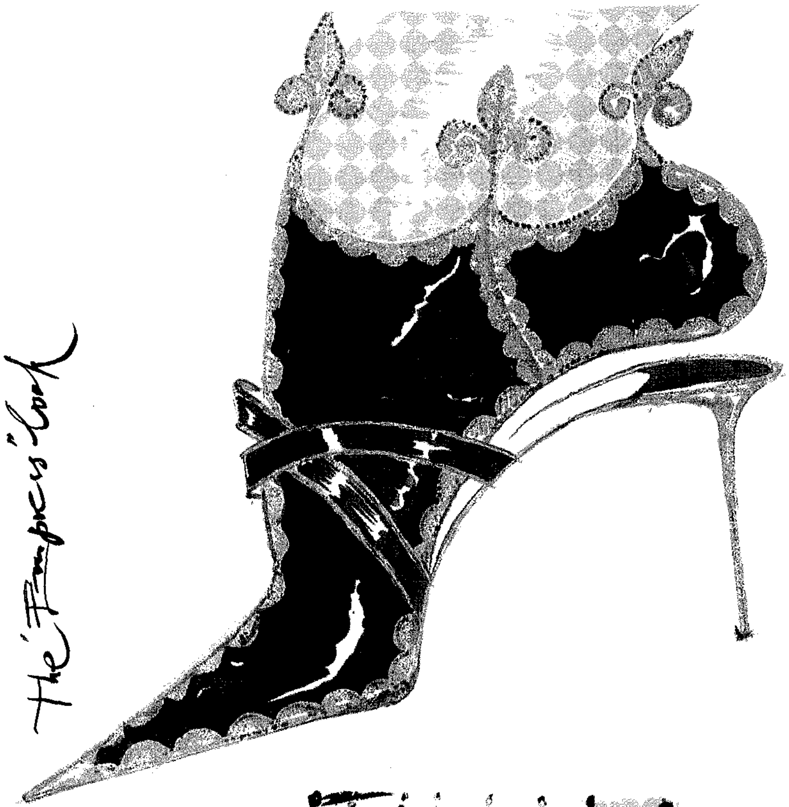
FASHION brought in the advertisers and paid the bills, but *Bazaar's* immersion in a wider culture was what made it an interesting magazine. Even *Vogue* was moving in that direction: after *Vogue* absorbed Frank Crowninshield's fading *Vanity Fair,* in 1936, its coverage of the arts became increasingly sophisticated and up-to-date, although consistently less daring than *Bazaar's.* Reproductions of "difficult" new work by Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Brancusi, and Giacometti appeared in *Bazaar,* along with commissioned drawings by Chagall, Tchelitchew, Dufy, Noguchi, Ben Shahn, and the egregiously available Dali. When Erté's contract finally ran out, Snow replaced him with Cassandre, the Russian-French poster artist, and his Art Deco covers gave *Bazaar* high newsstand visibility for the next three years. Surprises keep popping up even today as you leaf through the issues of Mrs. Snow's first decade. Here is Gypsy Rose Lee, the famous stripper, gowned in black satin by Vionnet and photographed by Hoyningen-Huene (*Bazaar's* fiction editor, George Davis, was engaged to Gypsy for a while, but the marriage never came off—he married Lotte Lenya instead); André Derain's oil portrait of Mme. Eve Curie, commissioned by *Harper's Bazaar;* Clarence John Laughlin's photographs of New Orleans graveyards; the twenty-four-year-old Orson Welles, with his wife and daughter; and, good grief, four pages in the August, 1939, issue on low-cost housing projects in Brooklyn and Harlem, photographed by Walker Evans. A page of children's hair styles in March, 1940, has four drawings of little girls with large eyes and by no means conventionally pretty features; the artist's name, printed in tiny letters, is "W. de Kooning."

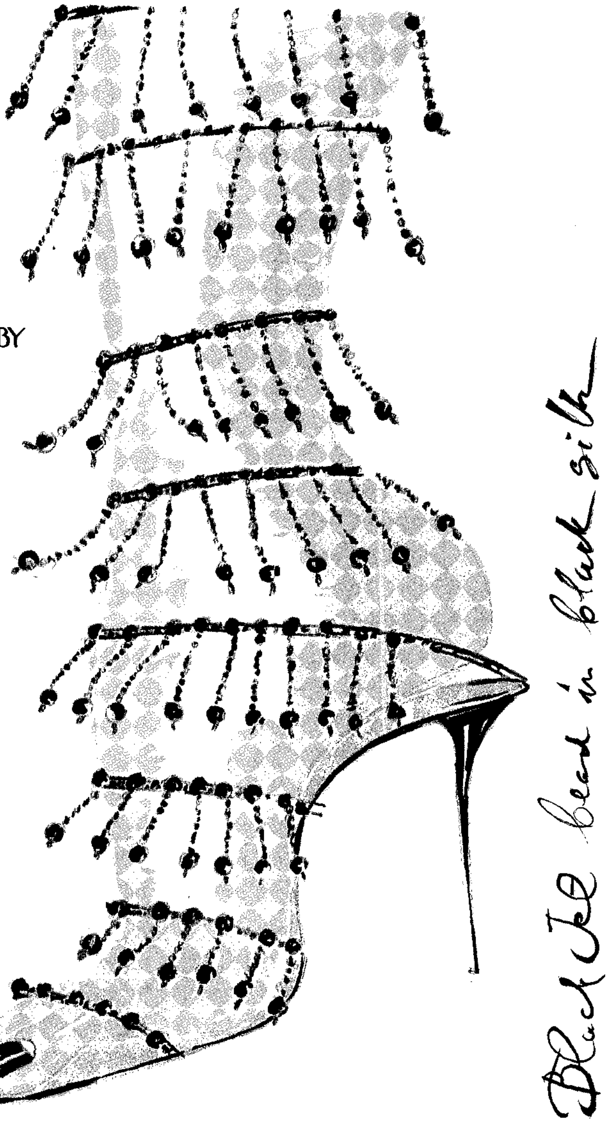
During the war years, surprises were harder to come by. Several new fiction writers made impressive débuts in *Bazaar,* including Jean Stafford, Eudora Welty, Jessamyn West, and Truman Capote. (He became one of Carmel's great pals.) They were brought in by Mary Louise Aswell, the sharp-eyed fiction editor who replaced George Davis in 1941, but Carmel herself had previously found Carson McCullers, and published her "Reflections in a Golden Eye" in two long installments in 1940. With Paris couture shut down for the duration, both *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* discovered American clothes. Diana Vreeland's enthusiasm for the informal, sporty American look made stars of Claire McCardell and other young designers, and her promotion of ballet slippers, corduroy, and synthetic fabrics like Celanese (which she pronounced "chelanayzay," Italian style) as substitutes for wartime scarcities helped to create the market for these items. Vreeland herself wore black slacks (or a long black skirt) and a black turtleneck or tunic, with a brilliant-colored scarf to set off her blood-red lipstick, rouged cheeks, and lacquered blue-black hair. She was a striking visual contrast to Mrs. Snow, whose apparent fragility screened her iron will. The two women were polar opposites in style. Vreeland loped through the office corridors with a peculiar, swinging gait—"like a camel," as several people described it. Snow clicked down the hall in high heels, leaving the scent of Patou's Joy in her wake; Vreeland once described her walk as "a pretty affectation, like a lisp." Vreeland was angular, vivid, *jolie laide.* Snow's high forehead and wide, straight mouth gave her an elfin look that was accentuated by her blue-white hair: prematurely white hair dyed so decisively that it was more blue than white; much more, in fact—*really* blue.

With all their differences, Mrs. Snow and Mrs. Vreeland got on remarkably well. They respected and trusted each other, and their infrequent disputes never led to bad feelings between them. *Harper's Bazaar* was Carmel's creation: she had built it from nothing into one of the best magazines in America, and, while giving Vreeland and Brodovitch a lot of leeway in their respective areas, she made all the important decisions. Like most people who know very clearly what they want, she could be quite ruthless about getting it. George Hoyningen-Huene once showed her a "private" photograph he had taken of Garbo—one he had promised her not to publish. "Carmel calmly announced that she was going to keep it and she was going to publish it," according to Vreeland. "We *all* protested. Carmel said, 'I don't care if George rots in *jail. I want that picture.*' " An editor or a photographer who failed to meet Carmel's standards of quality and diligence was soon asked to leave; her office door, the saying went, was shut only for pedicures and firings. Her anger came in two different forms: real rage, in which an ominous dark flush suffused her naturally rose-pink complexion; and therapeutic scoldings, with no color change. (She was quite proud of being able to lose her temper in French.) New employees were fascinated by her lack of self-consciousness about her left hand, which was missing its index finger. Badly lacerated in an automobile accident when she was bringing her newborn daughter Brigid home to Long Island from the hospital, it had been improperly treated by a local doctor; after several years of recurrent discomfort, she had decided impulsively to have it removed—one of the hasty decisions that she lived to regret—but she never tried to hide the deformity, and she wouldn't miss a beat when ticking off on the fingers of both hands a list of things to be done.

Mrs. Vreeland was the fashion editor, but she didn't go to the Paris collections: Mrs. Snow did that. It was the part of her job that she loved the most. She went to the last showings before the wartime shutdown, in February, 1940, and she came back for the first postwar showings, in 1946. (Actually, she had been there a year earlier, while the war was still going on. She wangled a seat on the PanAm Clipper to Lisbon, then made her way by train to Madrid and Paris, where she saw old friends and enlisted Henri Cartier-Bresson to photograph war-damaged Paris and London for *Harper's Bazaar.*) At the postwar collections, Carmel always occupied the seat of honor, perched on a sofa with her entourage, impeccably dressed and coiffed, watched covertly by every buyer in the room. By this time, she was famous for nodding off to sleep at intervals but always waking up for the best dress or the significant innovation. Richard Avedon, twenty-four years old and just getting started as a fashion photographer for *Bazaar*, remembers going with her to his first fashion show, at Dior, in 1947—the year of the New Look. "I was on her right on the gray velvet settee, and Marie-Louise Bousquet"—*Bazaar's* Paris editor, a red-wigged dynamo whose famous salons attracted *le tout-Paris*—"was on her left, and Bébé Bérard was curled up on the floor at her feet, with his dirty dog. And the whole time, as dress after dress came out, she told me stories about everybody in the room. She taught me through gossip, through narrative. She was terribly funny. But it was clear that she was adored, a real star, and this was before fashion people were stars."

Avedon was with her again, a year later, when Balenciaga unveiled his "unfitted" suit, a complete break with the tight-waisted tailoring of Dior's triumphant New Look—"this strange, flat silhouette, square shoulders, no bust, no hips, no backside," as Avedon described it. "At the end, after the model in the wedding dress, there was dead silence. Nobody got it. But then Carmel stood up and started to clap, all alone, slowly and deliberately, and a moment later the whole place was applauding." Her fervent admiration for Cristóbal Balenciaga, which had a great deal to do with the designer's postwar success, was absolutely genuine: Carmel wore Balenciaga suits almost exclusively for the rest of her life—gray flannel, deep reds and blues, subtle pinks and lavenders, according to the season, with a pillbox hat, pearls, and the big emerald-and-diamond pin that Johnny Schlumberger had designed for




Black Jet bead in black silk

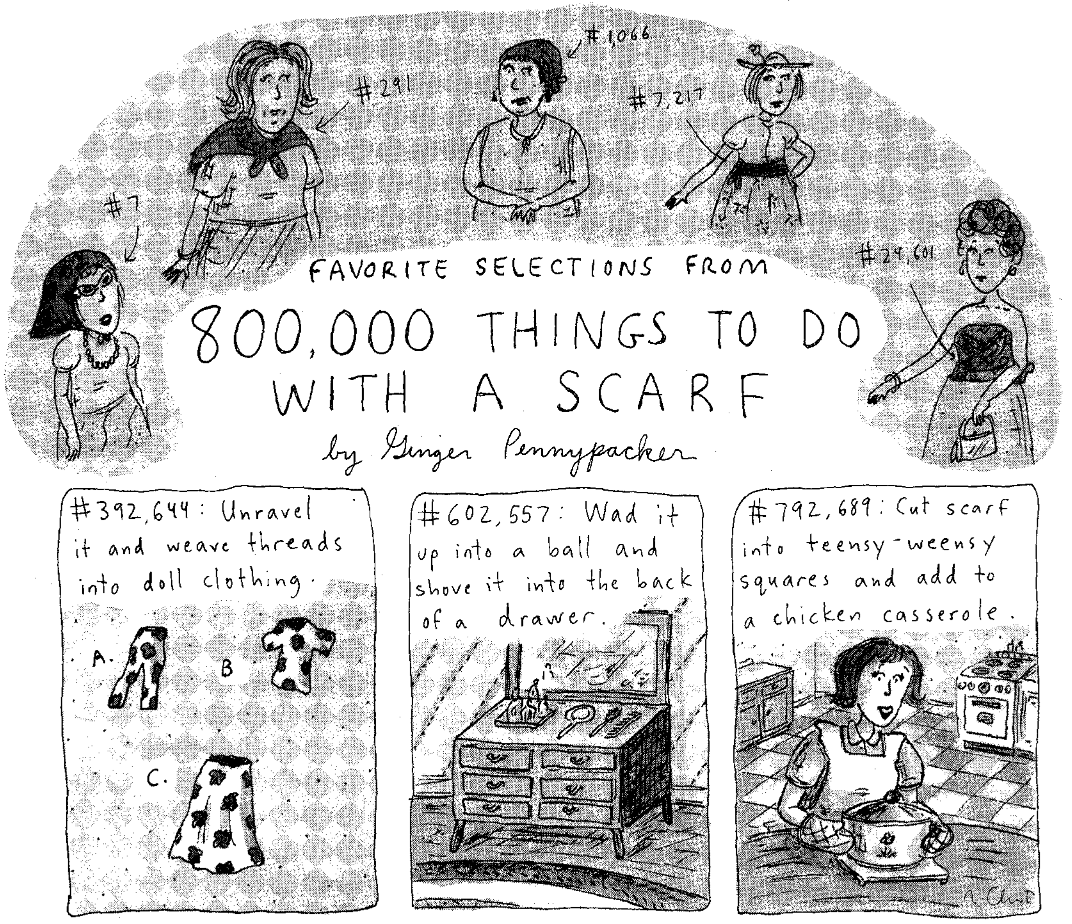
ARTIST'S SKETCHPAD BY MANOLO BLAHNIK

In an age of sensible footwear, Manolo Blahnik still believes in shoes-as-art. These two follies were inspired by Hollywood: Ava Gardner in "Knights of the Round Table" (top) and Edith Head and Walter Plunkett. If the shoe fits . . .

her, using jewels handed down in her family. (Her great friend Janet Flanner said that it was "the size and shape of a macaroon.") She owned five or six Balenciaga suits, and she would sell them after she had worn them for a year or so, according to her daughter Brigid. Sell to whom? "Her friends would line up for them," Brigid said. There was a nice irony in the fact that Carmel Snow and Diana Vreeland, fashion's high priestesses and anointers of the latest shifts in style, had both found their own personal look, from which they rarely—or never—deviated.

Avedon had come to *Bazaar* because of Brodovitch. Just out of the Merchant Marine in 1945, he had been approached first by *Vogue's* new art director, Alexander Liberman, who had seen and been impressed by some test shots he did for an aspiring model named Dorcas Nowell, whom he later married. Avedon had not even met Brodovitch at that point—he had been trying for weeks to get an appointment—but he brashly told Liberman that he was going to work for *Harper's Bazaar,* as he soon did. (When Brodovitch was asked why he hired Avedon, he replied, "He had elbow.") Avedon had read *Bazaar* as an adolescent, he had papered the walls of his Manhattan bedroom with Munkacsi photographs clipped from its pages, and in his mind there was no comparison between the two magazines. Although his veneration for Brodovitch never wavered during the years when Avedon himself was emerging as the most highly admired and widely imitated fashion photographer of his time, he felt that he learned as much from Carmel Snow as he did from the morose and taciturn Russian. When Carmel took him on, he said, he didn't know anything about fashion or the milieu that produced and supported it. She introduced him to famous people he had never heard of and told him what books to read and what artists' work he should look at—enlarged his world. "She took me into a world I couldn't have understood without her, and somehow got across to me what I was then able to get into my pictures." He once took her the results of a sitting he had done with Katharine Hepburn, early in his career at *Bazaar*—"twelve wet enlargements, one of which I particularly liked," he recalled. "And she said, 'But look, Dick, that may be a better photograph, but there's something in the eyes of this one.' She always went for the human quality. She was accessible day or night, she seemed to have all the time in the world, and you'd do anything you could to please her. Vreeland was a genius in her own way, but very different—cold, removed, flamboyant, where Carmel was humane and warm and funny. Vreeland had contempt for photography, interestingly enough. She was a snob, and very condescending. She'd say hello to the woman scrubbing the floor, and know her first name, but for years she called me Aberdeen. I never felt that sort of condescension from Carmel or from Brodovitch. They always lifted me up."

ALEXANDER LIBERMAN used *Bazaar's* obvious superiority, month after month, as a means of trying to lift up *Vogue.* "I was imitating *Bazaar* in many things, because it was a much better magazine," he recalls. "The photographers were better, the whole spirit of the magazine was more modern. Avedon would go to Paris and there would be elephants"—a reference to a famous photograph of a model in a regal Dior gown posed between two restless elephants at the Cirque d'Hiver—"but with Mrs. Chase every button counted." Avedon's work for *Harper's Bazaar* was the clearest example of the postwar shift in emphasis from the clothes themselves to the life images that designers wanted them to project—images of freedom and spontaneity and youth, for the most part, with an increasingly strong underlayer of sexuality. Fashion itself became less and less the issue in Avedon's shots of models jumping off curbs or kissing bicycle racers or doing cartwheels or running through fields. Fashion was absent entirely, moreover, from photographic spreads by Henri Cartier-Bresson, Brassaï, Bill Brandt, and Lisette Model that began appearing in *Bazaar* right after the war. This was photography presented for its own sake: portraits and


#291
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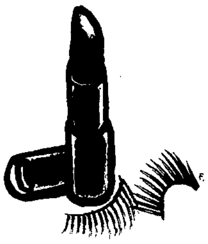
FAVORITE SELECTIONS FROM
800,000 THINGS TO DO WITH A SCARF
by Ginger Pennypacker
#392,644: Unravel it and weave threads into doll clothing.
A.
B
C.
#602,557: Wad it up into a ball and shove it into the back of a drawer.
#792,689: Cut scarf into teensy-weensy squares and add to a chicken casserole.

landscapes and urban scenes—powerful, sometimes harsh and uningratiating images—without a frock in sight. Carmel Snow published photographic portfolios for the same reason that she published new fiction and new poetry—because she wanted her magazine to appeal not just to the well-dressed woman but to the "well-dressed mind." In the business offices of the Hearst organization, questions were raised about this sort of thing. Why should a fashion magazine spend money on photographs of graveyards or housing projects? And, furthermore, if *Harper's Bazaar* was so superior to *Vogue*, as everyone said, why didn't the numbers show it? Although *Harper's Bazaar* had caught up with *Vogue* in circulation during the late nineteen-thirties, when both magazines were printing about two hundred thousand copies per issue, *Vogue* started pulling ahead again in the nineteen-forties, and its advertising revenues were consistently higher. Carmel brushed aside such questions. Like other great editors, she felt that she could handle the moneymen.

The magazine was the center of her life. Few people on the staff ever met her husband. If he was not off somewhere shooting or fishing, Snowie, as she called him, preferred to spend most of his time in the country, and she joined him there on weekends. When he drove her to the Oyster Bay station on Monday mornings, one of their neighbors would often notice that he was still wearing his pajamas. The Snows had a beautiful duplex apartment on the East River, and that was where Carmel stayed during the week. Her three daughters lived mainly in the country house, and were brought up by nannies until they went away to Foxcroft. The oldest daughter, Carmel, who took on much of the responsibility for rearing her younger sisters, had bitter rows with their mother over her being an absentee parent. It sometimes happened that promised treats and evenings at the theatre were cancelled at the last minute because an important *Bazaar* writer or photographer had arrived in town. Carmel's semi-annual trips to Europe took her away for weeks at a time; after the war, the three girls would listen to the last part of Carmel's radio broadcasts from Paris, in which, after giving the fashion news, she would always send them a personal message. They all treasured Sunday mornings in the Long Island house, when they were allowed to lounge on their mother's bed while she read the Sunday paper. All three of them adored their mother and longed to have more of her, and Carmel must have felt some guilt over that. Brigid, the youngest, and the only one living today, says they were all "spoiled rotten." Carmel's grandchildren say the same thing about their GanGan Snow, who let them do somersaults over the satin-covered sofa in her New York apartment, and who once, playing hide-and-seek at a grandchild's birthday party, was hilariously discovered in the shower, dressed in one of her Balenciaga suits and matching hat, which got soaking wet when the water was inadvertently turned on. Mary Palen Snow, the middle child, had a breakdown during her first term at Bryn Mawr, and schizophrenia was diagnosed, but eventually she got better and had a happy marriage. So did both her sisters. None of them ever showed the slightest interest in a career.



Vogue became much livelier in the nineteen-fifties, as Liberman's influence gradually prevailed there, but the triumvirate of Snow, Vreeland, and Brodovitch kept *Bazaar* at least two steps ahead of the competition and the reader. Kenneth Tynan's witty essays on British intellectuals and theatre people; Hans Namuth's photographs of young artists, including Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner; Dylan Thomas's "A Child's Christmas in Wales" in the December, 1950, issue; Auden's libretto for "The Rake's Progress"; Brassaï's photographs of Robert Graves on Majorca; a piece on the avant-garde composer John Cage in his tenement apartment on the Lower East Side; stories about the Watts Towers of Simon Rodia and the fantastic "palace" of Ferdinand Cheval; photographs of Le Corbusier's Chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Haut at Ronchamp; Saul Steinberg's labyrinthine covers and drawings; Andy Warhol's fanciful drawings of shoes—these and countless other surprises enriched the cinematic flow of Avedon's theatrical fashion photographs and celebrity portraits and the more traditional but brilliantly executed work of Hoyningen-Huene and Dahl-Wolfe. The magazine was almost all photographs now, fashion drawings having become practically obsolete. Brodovitch's Surrealist-inspired layouts of the nineteen-thirties had given way to less crowded pages, with lots of white space and cleaner type. Brodovitch, although his influence had never been greater, was drinking himself to death. Avedon and others considered him a tragic character, plagued by depression and alcoholism and by a retarded son, who on two occasions set fire to their house. Young photographers and new assistants in the art department, hugely excited at being asked out to the Brodovitches' barn, in East Hampton, would spend the weekend cleaning and cooking while their host and hostess drank themselves into a stupor. By 1956, he had virtually stopped coming into the office. Once a month, Carmel sent his assistant, a young woman named Adrian (A.G.) Allen, out to East Hampton in a Carey Cadillac, carrying the layouts for the upcoming issue, but Brodovitch barely glanced at them.

Carmel was drinking a lot, too—Martinis at lunch and bourbon (pronounced "boor-*bohn*," like the French kings) before dinner. It never seemed to affect her performance at the office, although Avedon remembers that he stopped expecting decisions to be made after lunch. Nearly everyone drank more in those days, of course. The working atmosphere at *Bazaar* was as upbeat as ever. "It was the most exciting time in my career," A. G. Allen said recently. "The office was really small, two floors on Madison Avenue at Fifty-sixth Street. It was her magazine and we were her people, and somehow she brought out the best in all of us. She never hesitated—if she didn't like something, it was out. And she never felt she had to explain herself. She wasn't dictatorial, she was just in charge. At one point, after her daughters married, I moved into the apartment with her and Mr. Snow. She just decided she had to take care of me. We used to go to the theatre a lot, and there were wonderful dinner parties with Cartier-Bresson and people like that. She found my first husband for me. We got married in her apartment."

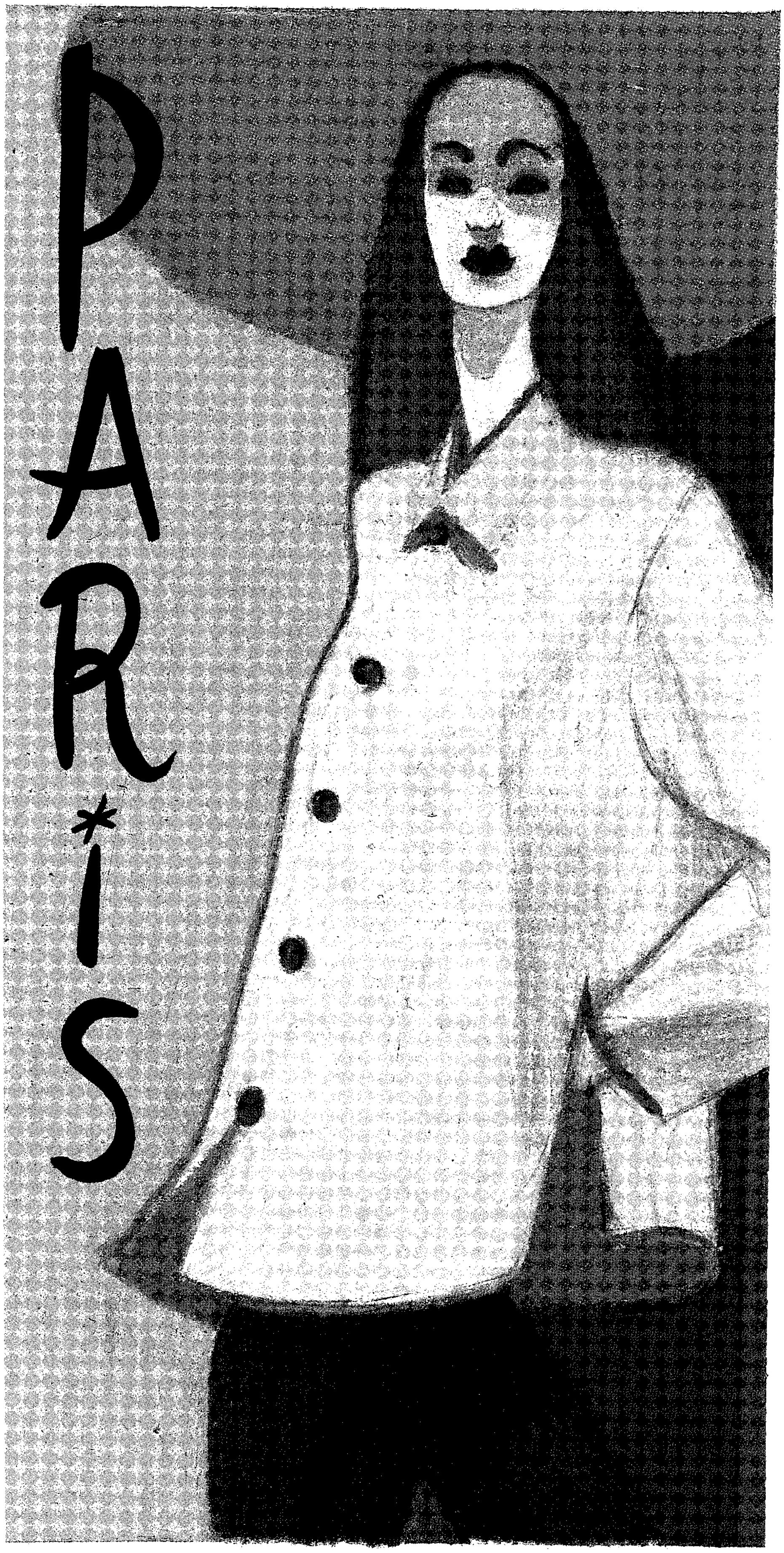
Carmel never bothered to choose an heir apparent, according to A. G. Allen, because "she expected to go on forever." The moneymen at Hearst knew better. They may have hoped to soften the blow by choosing her own niece to succeed her—Nancy White, Tom White's daughter, whom Carmel had introduced to Paris when she was a young girl. Carmel had warned them not to give the job to Diana Vreeland, who wanted it very much. Mrs. Vreeland, she said, was a brilliant fashion editor who should never, ever, be the editor-in-chief of a magazine. Five years later, when the mercurial Vreeland moved on to her glory days as editor-in-chief of *Vogue*, she was obliged to work under the supervision of the sorely taxed Alexander Liberman, who had been elevated to the post of editorial director primarily as a means of keeping Vreeland in check.

Nancy White was a known commodity at Hearst, having been for several years the editor of Hearst's stolidly middlebrow *Good Housekeeping*. (Mrs. Snow called it "Good Housecooking.") The moneymen thought she had more respect for the business side of magazine publishing than her aunt did, and they were right. "We needed an artist and they sent us a housepainter," Vreeland commented. When Nancy White replaced Carmel as *Bazaar's* chief editor, at the end of 1957, Carmel accepted the event with haughty and dignified despair. Nancy White never moved into Carmel's office—she took the smaller one next door. Carmel retained the right to represent *Harper's Bazaar* twice a year at the Paris collections, and to tell her successor what she was doing wrong. "It was terrifying," Nancy White recalls today. "Terrifying and challenging and upsetting. She did resent me, and I don't blame her. It was her baby. She said to me at one point, 'Nancy, where is the surprise in the magazine?' And she was absolutely correct—I didn't have a surprise. I've remembered that all my days."

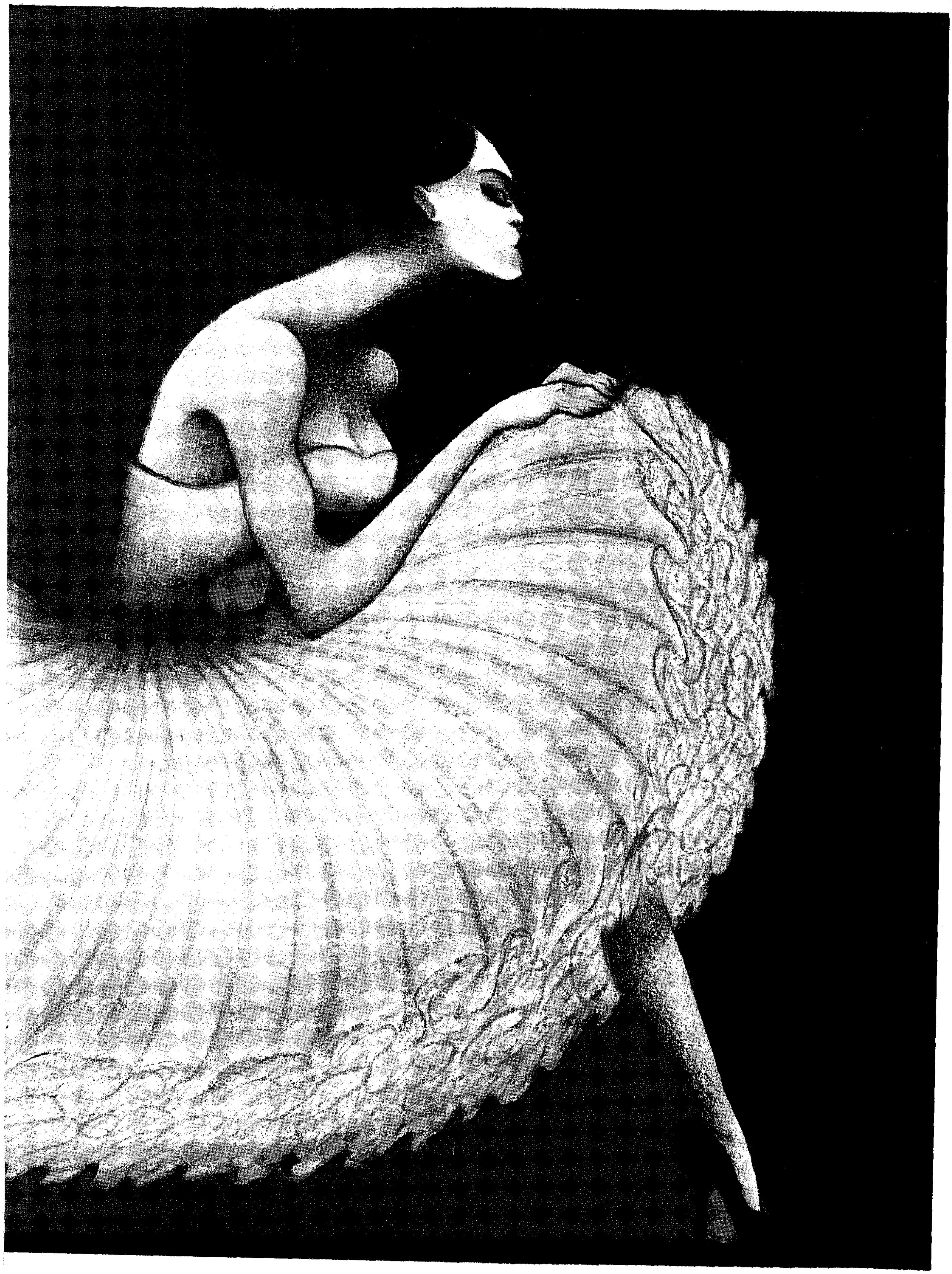
Carmel bought a castle in Ireland, with the romantic notion of reclaiming her roots, but it was too big and too cold, and houses were not what she cared about. She came home and embarked on her memoirs, with the help of Mary Louise Aswell, her former fiction editor. Her mind and her memory were as sharp as ever, but she tired easily and ate virtually nothing. A week after their final tape-recorded interview session, in the spring of 1961, Carmel died peacefully in her sleep.

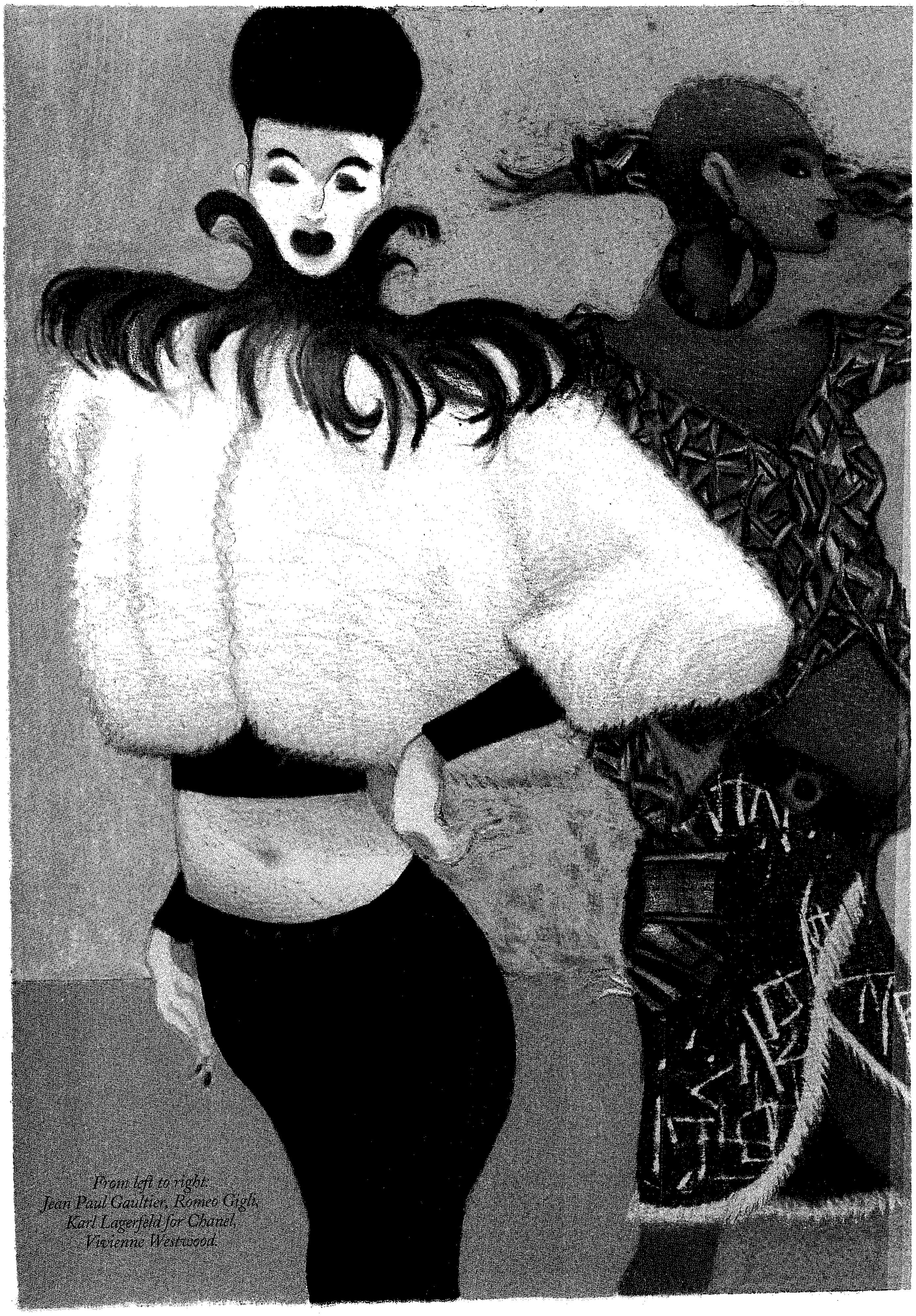
At the wake, she was laid out in a red-brocade evening suit by Balenciaga. "There was something so magnificent about it," A. G. Allen recalls. "Even the end was a triumph." ◆

SPRING 1995 PARIS COLLECTIONS

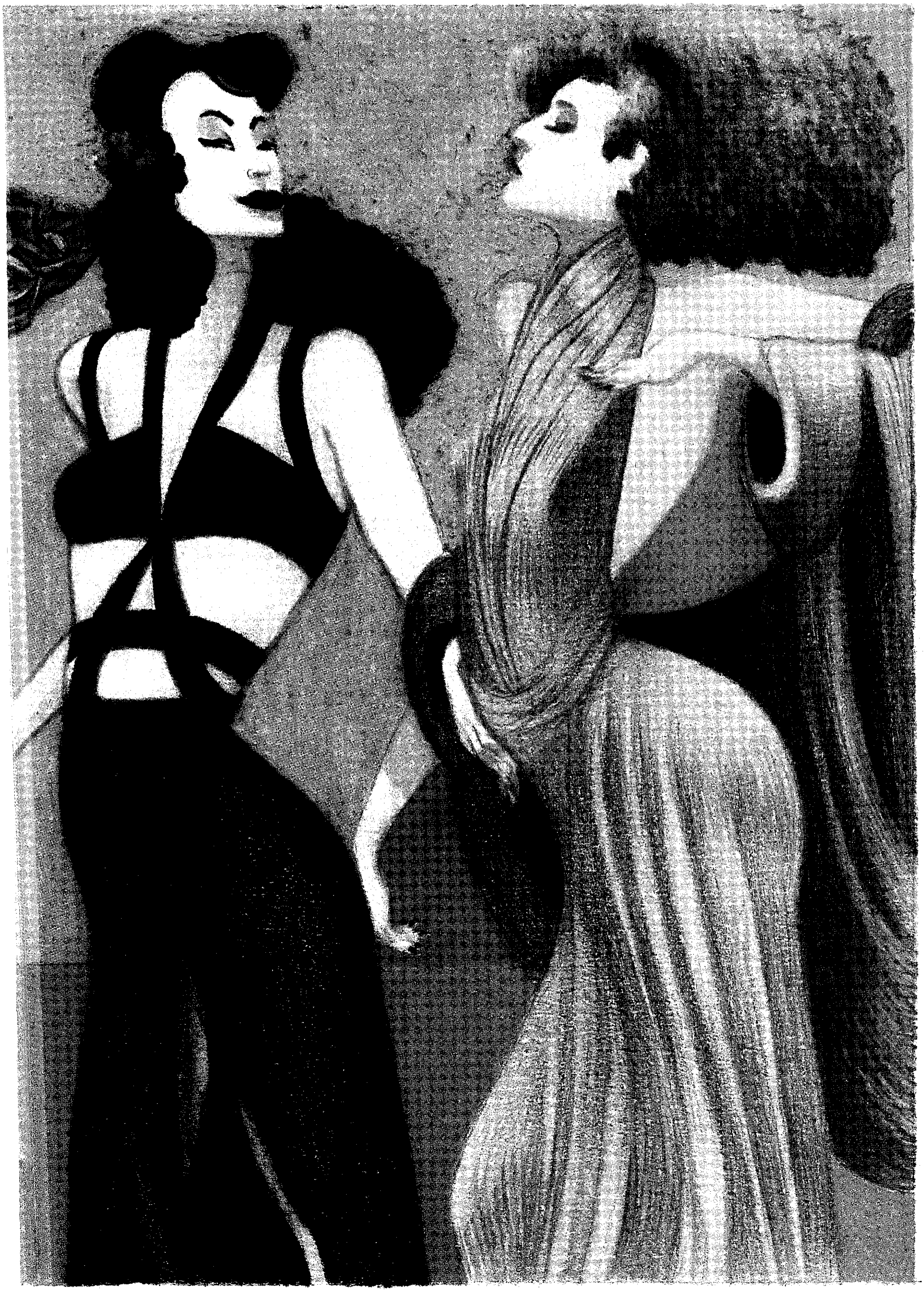


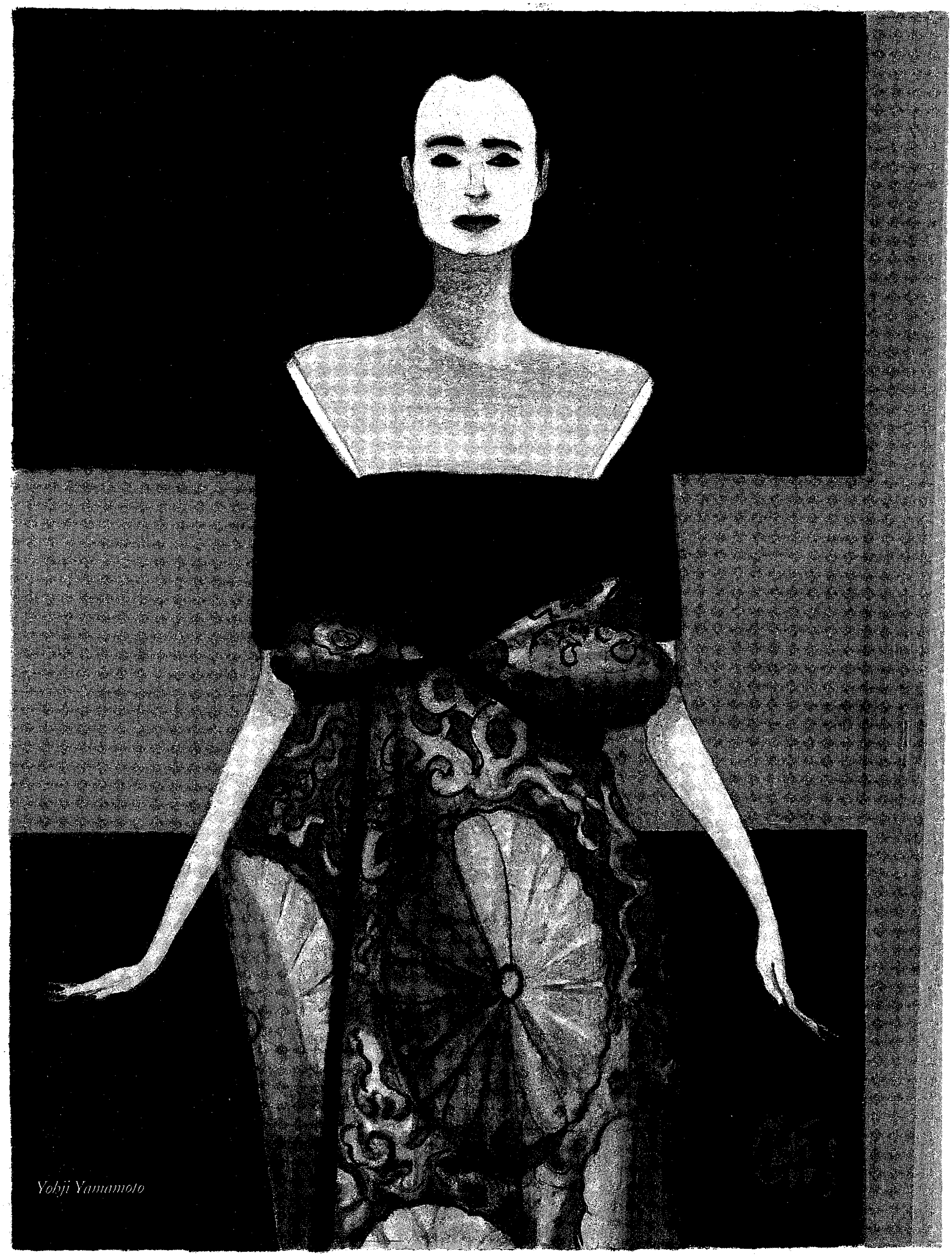
BY LORENZO MATTOTTI





From left to right:
Jean Paul Gaultier, Romeo Gigli,
Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel,
Vivienne Westwood.




Yohji Yamamoto

PERSONAL HISTORY

MOM, FASHION ICON

Growing up the son of Pat Buckley, a woman as famous for her closet as she is for her social activities, was as amusing as it was confusing.

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

I WASN'T aware that my mother was much different from other mothers until one day at boarding school, when I was fourteen. It was the Monday after Parents' Weekend. One of the older boys said to me, in front of some other older boys, "Hey, Buckley, your mother's a piece of ass."

I stood there with my face burning, trying to figure out what, exactly, the correct response was. I wasn't even sure that what he had said was an insult. There was no higher accolade at Portsmouth Abbey School, Hormone High, circa 1967, than "piece of ass." But when it was applied to one's mother it had the whiff of fightin' words. The ensuing scuffle was over in five seconds, with me on my back on the floor and the older boy kneeling on my chest, explaining that what he'd been referring to was "her clothes."

Further evidence that my mother was different came from the school switchboard operator—a fat, gossipy woman who regularly pored over the "Suzy Says" society column in the *News*. "Your mutha went to a big party last night for Walter Cronkite!" she would yell out into the crowded mailbox room as I tried to disappear. "She wore an Eves Saint Lawrent dress! Musta cost a *fortune!*"

It was around then that the phrase "the chic and stunning Mrs. William F. Buckley" entered my family's life. Typically, my mother would use it when she was coming in from the garden—dirty, in jeans and a black T-shirt, her hair pulled back, no makeup. "So much for the chic and stunning Mrs. Buckley," she would say to the house guests.

"Where did that phrase originate?" I asked her a few weeks ago. We were having lunch at an expensive Italian restaurant on the Upper East Side. She was wearing a knockout Oscar de la Renta beige suit, pale stockings, bone-colored pumps, huge costume-gold bracelets and earrings. Her hair was freshly coiffed. She had on makeup.

She didn't remember, except to say that she was pretty sure it hadn't come from *Women's Wear Daily*, the trade journal that, along with its glossy cousin, *W*, has been covering her intensively for the last quarter century or so. (Headline, 1977: "AN ORIGINAL: PAT BUCKLEY." 1985: "THE POWER OF PAT.") In 1975, two years after she first made the best-dressed list, the *Times* headline read, "BEST-DRESSED PATRICIA BUCKLEY: PROUDER OF ROLE AS HOUSEWIFE."

"This linguine," she pronounced, "is inedible." I had to keep coaxing her back onto the topic of fashion throughout the lunch. She kept getting off it, giving me new recipes. "Oh," she interrupted herself at one point in the midst of a discussion of French versus American designers. "I have made the most extraordinary discovery. Knorr fish stock. It comes in cubes, like bouillon. It has *changed* my life."

Chic and stunning, I pressed.

"I don't know," she said. "Probably in 'Suzy.' Call Aileen. She'll know. Your father has invited sixty-two people to this concert Friday. Where am I supposed to seat them all—on my lap?"

Eventually we decided that it was Suzy. There was another phrase much in Suzy's repertoire then: "*belle poitrine*." As in, "Mrs. Buckley, of the *belle poitrine*." For years, I laughed along with it; then, one day in French class, we got to body parts, and I discovered it meant "great tits."

Over the linguine alle vongole (which I found quite good), we did a sort of Recherche du Hemlines Perdu, going back over all the different fashion phases she has gone through. For the last twenty years or so, it's been mostly Bill Blass and Oscar de la Renta, with a little Donna Karan, Isaac Mizrahi, and Calvin Klein thrown in. Before the era of Blass and de la Renta, there was the era of caftans (the mid-seventies), and, before that, maxis. (Never midis: "that ugly creation," she told the press at the time.) Before that—the sixties now—there was her "Native American period. Beaded headbands, long buckskin skirts, high boots. There is no broth in this pasta at all. Big silver jewelry. If I was feeling particularly frivolous, a feather. I loved Mary Quant. When was she? I fell for her clothes in a big way. I think I started wearing short skirts before almost anybody, mainly because of my beauteous legs. Who wants to read this kind of crap? Does yours have any broth? The mid-sixties, Pucci. All my bathing suits, pants, tops were Pucci." And back in the fifties, before her New York life began—before she had friends named Nan, Mica, Jerome, Chessy, Estée, Slim, Rocky, and Pano—she was a suburban Connecticut carpooling housewife and mom. "Classy country clothes, probably from Lord & Taylor. But I always had my sort of hooker side at night."

Who taught her about fashion?

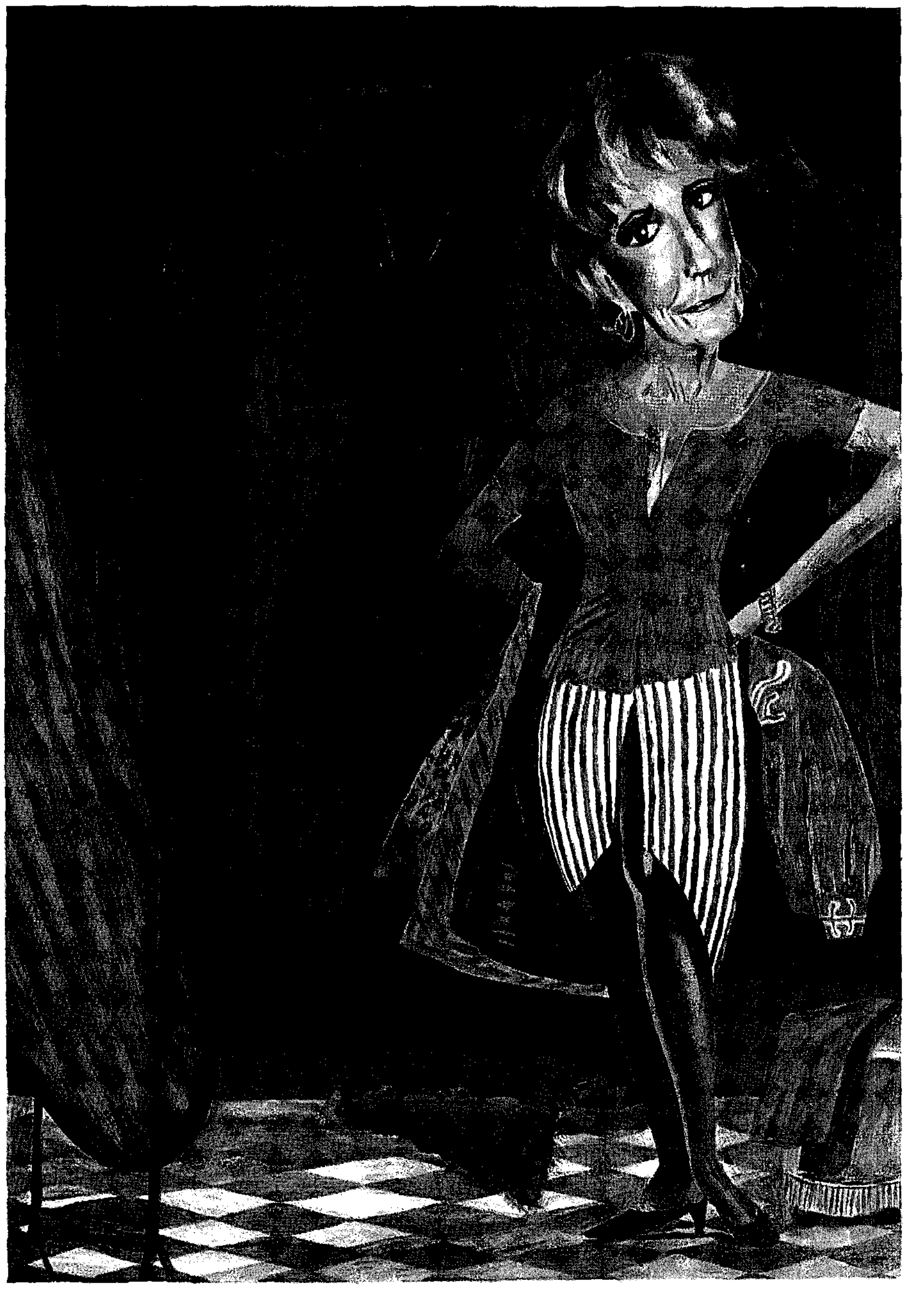
"Me. I think I've always had an eye. For my own kind of style. Mind you," she added heavily, "there have been *many* mistakes made."

This part took no coaxing. She relishes stories in which she is the figure of fun. "About four years ago. It was a Blass, made like an Austrian shade, all wired and pleated. When I was having my fitting, no one said, 'Sit down.' The minute I went out in it, I sat down, and the whole thing came up over my head. People were in total hysteria. I had to stand up to eat."

She went on, "Bill Blass was the first designer I took very seriously. I adored him. It was because I became enamored of—how would you call it?—the classic American look with a tweak to it. Maybe 'tweak' isn't the right word. There's a certain casualness, but there ain't no grunge there. Have you seen the latest Chanel outfits? Please. Bill is a classic American designer. He never loses sight of taste. I didn't mean 'tweak,' I meant 'twist.' A little added . . . If he's dressing you sombrely, there's always something to take the sombre out of it. And his evening clothes are very romantic."

My mother's parents were Canadian. Her mother was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba; her father was from Toronto. They lived in Vancouver, British Columbia, where my mother was born and raised. Her father was a mountainous, gruff self-made man who at various times made his money in timber, cattle, gold mines, oil, gas, and racehorses. His name was Austin Taylor; his wife's name was Kathleen. She had soft Irish skin, beautiful red hair, a great, matronly bosom. She was called Babe. They were always well turned out, in a classic sort of way, but they never would have thought of themselves as fashionable.

“One time,” she said, “the *Province* or the *Sun* ran a picture of Daddy on the front page and the caption underneath said, ‘Sartorial Gem.’ He was in such a rage that he went out to the farm and stayed there for three days.”



The “chic and stunning” Mrs. Buckley: “Fashion is fun. As long as you don’t embarrass your husband.”

MARK ULRIKSEN

I think this is where her profound ambivalence about the big-city part of her life comes from. Many times, I’ve heard her describe herself as “a simple country girl from a frontier town in British Columbia, whom my father named after his favorite hunting dog.” To put it politely, this is total bullshit. There is nothing simple about my mother, and it’s been a long time since she left Vancouver. The part about being named for a springer spaniel may be true. But something in her upbringing—I can hear my grandmother’s voice admonishing her (“*Pat!*”), and even when she was in her late thirties I noticed that she wouldn’t smoke in front of her father—has kept her grounded throughout many a New York vanity bonfire.

In 1975, Enid Nemy wrote in the *Times*:

> Sometimes she describes herself as a jolly green giant. Other times, she thinks she looks like a pregnant stork. She hates shopping, and her closets wouldn’t give anyone an inferiority complex. . . . She likes fashion, but it isn’t a passion. It’s more in the nature of an evanescent flirtation, fun when there is nothing else to do. In Mrs. Buckley’s case, there’s something else to do most of the time.

From her mother, she inherited civic-mindedness. In Stamford, when she wasn’t carpooling, it was the Junior League. In New York she got involved with the Institute for Reconstructive Plastic Surgery, Memorial Sloan-Kettering and, more recently, St. Vincent’s Hospital, the Metropolitan Museum’s Costume Institute, and many other institutions. The “most of the time” referred to above is spent taking care of my father—a job that would keep all of Brigham Young’s twenty-seven wives busy. “I guess the only thing I really do well is run a house,” she once told a reporter. That is complete bullshit, but she has the gift of self-deprecation.

My father has the fashion sense of a Romanian country-parish priest, but he appreciates beauty on a woman, and has always done his best to be encouraging. When she made the Best Dressed Hall of Fame, the Valhalla of Seventh Avenue, he called me up to tell me, “Be sure to make a fuss. This is apparently a *very* big deal.” I called her and made a big fuss. She changed the subject, if memory serves, to the dog’s bladder infection.

Does my father still make a fuss?

“Yes. I don’t understand why the food is this way. I had exactly the same thing here last week, and it was delicious. Whenever I come out in a new dress, he always makes a point of saying, ‘A new dress. I think it’s absolutely divine.’ The other day, I came out in a fifteen-year-old Madame Grès, and he said, ‘Ducky, that’s absolutely divine. Who is it—Bill or Oscar?’ He’d seen it twenty times.”

At last, she is slightly warming to the subject. She likes fashion more than she will admit. Bill Blass and Oscar de la Renta are two of her best friends. At some point in the late seventies, their photographs, framed in silver, turned up on her crowded bibelot tables. For more than thirty years, she has been very close to Nan Kempner, whom she calls “probably the best-dressed woman I know.”

Yes, thank you, she’s finished with

the linguine alle vongole. "Fashion is fun. As long as you don't embarrass your husband. I remember last year coming down the staircase at the apartment in an outfit that I thought was absolutely, startlingly gorgeous, and your father said, 'You look absolutely gorgeous. Where's the rest of the dress?' It was up to the kazoo. Don't use the word 'kazoo.' "

Another time: "I remember it was a Victorian show, and Blaine"—Blaine Trump—"got herself rigged out in some fancy-dandy outfit, and I was standing with Robert"—Blaine's husband—"and some other man. Blaine was wandering around in bustles and furbelows and God knows what, and this man said, 'My God, did you get a load of that?' And Robert said, 'I not only got a load of it, I'm *married* to it.'

"Espresso, please. I won't tell you what designer it was, but I went about a year ago to order my fall outfits down on Seventh Avenue, and out comes this dress with cutouts here." She points to just below her still-*belle poitrine*. "Black velvet, with net. And I said, 'My God, I think I'm too old for this.' And the designer said, 'But Brooke Astor's just ordered it in four different colors.' Do you want dessert? I really shouldn't. I can't fit into any of my clothes."

I have been hearing her say this since the mid-nineteen-fifties, when my memory began.

"The Italians are not good at pastries. Do you want more cappuccino? I don't know what else to tell you about fashion. Except what I'd really like to do. My wildest fantasy would be to dress like Cher."

Pat!

"Just dreams one has. Although, much as I'd like to go around looking like Cher, I can't. Why? Well, Cher and I, shall we say, *share* different ages. No no no, this is my treat. Where are my glasses? I can no longer see anything. You'll have to calculate the tip. I'm sorry it was so dreadful. It must not be their regular chef. I'm sure all this will be riveting. Just remember that I never take myself seriously about fashion. In fact, I never take myself seriously at all. Given my taste in clothes, I'll probably come back as RuPaul." ♦

ANNALS OF TECHNOLOGY

CLIP ART

Homeliest and most durable of our fashion accessories, the fingernail clipper employs a pleasing American know-how to dispatch our mini-chips into thin air.

BY NICHOLSON BAKER

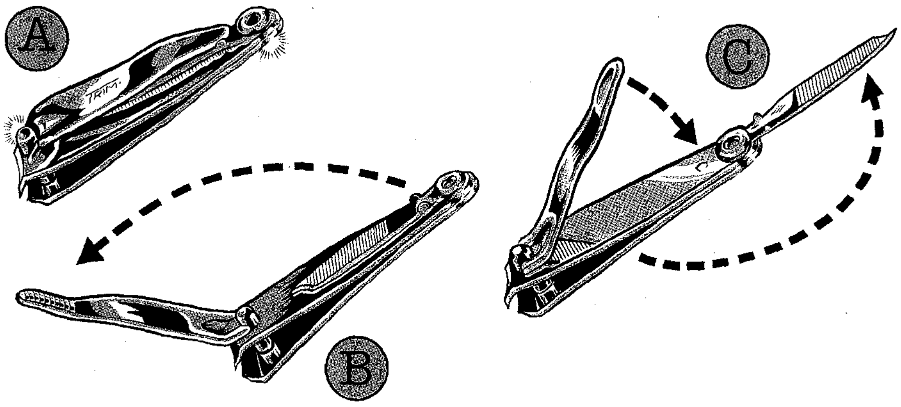
PROFESSIONAL men can't sport much in the way of jewelry. The gemless wedding band, the watch, the belt buckle, the key chain, the car, possibly the quietly costly blue-enamelled pen in a shirt pocket are among the few sanctioned outlets for the male self-embellishing urge. Occasionally permissible are the shirt stud, the cufflink, and the nautical brass blazer button. Bas-relief suspender clasps, various forms of tie and collar tackle, and chunky nonmarital fingerware are allowable on men who make a living by commission. The demotion of smoke has eliminated the ornate cigarette lighter. Neck and wrist chains are inadvisable. Metalwork for the male nostril, tongue, ear, or foreskin is an option only in outlying areas.

But fingernail and toenail clippers—the unworn but elegant accessories to all men's fashion, since no man has ever looked presentable with long nails (long being anything over three-sixteenths of an inch)—continue to glitter legitimately in an otherwise unpolished age. Like fancy pens and pocket watches, these palmable curios have a function—that of severing corneous shrapnel from key areas of the human body with a bracing abruptness, a can-do metallic snap, that leaves their user with the illusion that he is progressively, clip by hardened-steel clip, gaining control of his shambling life. They offer some of the satisfactions of working out on exercise machines without the sweat and gym shorts; some of the pleasures of knuckle manipulation without the risk of arthritic deformity; some of the rewards of cracking a nut without having to eat it. You may crouch over the wastebasket while you operate, but there is happily no assurance that anything clipped will end up there; for just as certain insects will hop or fly off so fast that they seem not to displace themselves physically but simply to disappear on the spot, so the clipper chip vanishes at the very instant the jaws meet and chime, propelled toward a windowsill or on some untraceable tangent, never to trouble anyone again unless a bare foot happens to rediscover it.

The market for clippers is apparently unsaturable. This year, millions of men will buy one, as they have for decades, despite the fact that these maintenance tools almost never wear out and are entirely unnecessary. You can cut your nails just fine with a decent pair of scissors, assuming a rudimentary ambidextrousness; in fact, from one point of view a scissor cut is less labor-intensive than clipping, since, despite the helpful curvature of the clipper jaws, it often takes three angled snips to approximate the arc of a given fingernail. (The cut facets thus formed are surprisingly sharp the first time you scratch an itch, but they wear away in a day.) Clippers sell steadily because, like clippings, they disappear (in the backs of drawers, in glove compartments) and must be replaced, and because they are beautiful and cheap. A big clear drum of ninety-nine-cent Trim-brand clippers sitting near the drugstore's cash register like a bucket of freshly netted minnows is an almost irresistible sight. They are the ideal weight and smoothness; they exploit the resiliency of their material both to maintain their assembly without rattling and to hold their business edges apart. They appear to have aerodynamic virtues. And, once bought, they can alter their profile in a single puzzle-solving flip-and-pivot of the lever arm, without excessive play or roughness or torn rotator cuffs, from minnow shape to grasshopper shape and back again. True children of the dexter brain, they were our first toy Transformers: metallic dual-phase origamis that seem triumphantly Japanese and yet happen to be, in their perfected form, a product of the small town of Derby, in southern Connecticut, near the Sikorsky helicopter plant.

In the forties, the W. E. Bassett

Company made washers for the rubber heel pieces on men's shoes (these stopped nails from piercing through to the foot area) and artillery components for the United States Army. After the war, William E. Bassett, founder, retooled his equipment in Derby, and devoted himself to the production of a superior jaw-style nail clipper, the Trim clipper. The jawed design had been around since the nineteenth century, but Bassett was its Bernini. He added, for example, two thoughtful nibs near the base of the tiny (and, in the experience of some, unused) nail file which together keep the lever arm aligned in its closed position; and he replaced the unsatisfactory pinned rivet with the lovely *notched* rivet. (The Chinese still use pinned rivets in their mediocre baby-nail clipper, manufactured for Evenflo.) The stylish, and patented, thumb-swerve in the Trim's lever was Bassett's idea, too.



MARK ZINGARELLI

According to William's brother Henry (who died, as the chairman of the board, in May of 1994, at the age of eighty-four), the best fingernail clipper Bassett ever made was the Croydon model of the late forties. It was stamped with a clipper-ship emblem and was promoted in *Esquire* for the jewelry-store trade. But William Bassett's sons William C. Bassett, now the president and treasurer, and Dave Bassett, now the company's manufacturing engineering manager, continue the work of innovation and cost-manicuring. Despite some exciting recent work by the Koreans, who manufacture all Revlon's more expensive but not quite so well-finished clippers, along with the Gem line, the Trim clipper by Bassett continues its reign as the best on the planet. (Clippers are chrome-plated after being assembled. The finished Revlon clippers frequently betray their undercoating in those areas where one part obscured another in the electrolyte solution; Trim clippers, on the other hand, because they are designed to minimize this shadowing, almost never do.)

All Bassett's grooming aids—from emery boards to tweezers—earn high marks among power users, in fact; this past August, for example, Jerry Lewis's secretary called the company directly to order a dozen five-inch triple-cut Trim nail files (with accompanying blue vinyl protective sheaths), because Mr. Lewis couldn't obtain them locally. "The tweezer is a very fussy item," Dave Bassett said recently. Each Bassett tweezer tip (its inner edge ground "to help grab that hair") is inspected manually, under a magnifier. The company makes nail clippers plated in gold as well as in chrome; its Heirloom line offers gift sets like the Saddlebag, which includes scissors, a bottle opener, and folding nail files, along with an anchor pair of clippers. This Christmas, Bassett will be selling the Holiday Family Manicure Kit, with a fingernail clipper and a toenail clipper, two wooden cuticle pokers, some emery boards, and a pair of tweezers, displayed against a background of falling snow and rising reindeer. (What better way to spend Christmas morning with one's loved ones?) For Dr. Scholl's, Bassett has created an extraordinary matte-black and gold-plated piece of toenail-cleaving insanity that would not be out of place dangling from the rearview mirror of a new forty-valve 3.5-litre Ferrari F355.

It won't do to labor the parallels between caring for a fingernail and manufacturing a fingernail clipper. Making a clipper is considerably more complex. Still, it is striking how reminiscent of human clippings are the spurned little pieces of scrap metal exiting from the side of the deafening Minster stamping press. Once cut (from rolls of Midwestern steel, at an impact force of roughly fifteen tons), the clipper "blanks" must be cleaned of oil, spot-welded, racked, hardened for two hours in a massive furnace, then oil-quenched, cleaned again, tempered in a second furnace to limber them up a little, and finally revolved in huge barrels with sixty thousand of their fellows for several days in a slurry of metal slugs, abrasives, and lime, to smooth away unhandy burrs. Vibrating bowls jiggle the components into sequential position, preparing them for a definitive riveting, which is accompanied by a Fred Astaire-like volley of air-cylinder tappings and flourishes. Each clipper gets a sharpened cutting edge; a digital image system checks the finished edges for parallelism. Eyelets, shot in at the caudal end, affix the nail files; then the entire splayed clipper, racked on hooks, proceeds through the plating sequence—ten minutes in a warm nickel bath, a minute or two of chrome. A nimble piece of pneumatics straightens the akimbo file and closes the lever. At last the basic Bassett fingernail clipper is ready for action. You can determine the year your clipper was made by referring to the inside of the lever arm.

Nail care has been weighing on my thoughts recently, I confess, because the great Stephen King, in an introduction to his recent short-story collection, "Nightmares & Dreamscapes," describes one of my books as a "meaningless little fingernail paring." Are we to infer from "paring" that the Bard of Bangor doesn't possess or know how to operate a Trim (or a Gem, or a Revlon, or even a La Cross) clipper of his own? Does he envision himself as the heir of Joyce's artist-hero, in "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," who was "refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails"? Does he still whittle? (Bassett's sales are "really taking off" in Ireland right now, according to Barbara Shannon, the company's marketing manager; it seems that the Irish are through with Joyce's manual methods and insist on taking, with Trim's help, the shortcut to artistry.) Or is Mr. King rather implying that someone like me disdainfully pares and fiddles while he, market-wise progressivist, presses on with the latest technology?

If so, I can assure Mr. King that I, too, clip—not as often as I should, perhaps, but with genuine enthusiasm. When I want a really authentic experience, I sometimes use a toenail clipper on my fingernails, shuddering with the thrill of fulcrumed power; and then, for my toes, I step on up to Revlon's veterinary-gauge Nipper, a parrot-beaked personal-pruning weapon that, but for its chrome plate, looks as if it should be stored in the garage. A dense, semi-opaque shard cut by this nineteen-dollar piece of spring-loaded Brazilian craftsmanship recently rose from what was left of my ravished toenail and travelled across the room, landing in a box of tax records, where it remains.

We can say with some certainty (and sadness) that Nabokov did *not* use nail clippers. That is, John Shade, "Pale Fire" 's poet, did not:

> *The little scissors I am holding* are
> A dazzling synthesis of sun and star.
> I stand before the window and I pare
> My fingernails. . . .

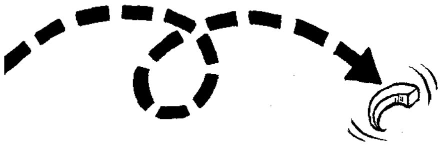
(Italics mine.) The cutting of a fingernail is important in Nabokov: it may constitute for him the act of self-liberation from annotative servitude, since he is demonstrably aware of the traditional scholarly use of the nail's edge as a marginal place-inscriber. In Pushkin's "Eugene Onegin," Tatiana learns about Onegin's mind by studying his library, and she notices (in Nabokov's translation) that

> Many pages preserved
> the trenchant mark of fingernails.

Nabokov's commentary to these lines mentions Sheridan's "The Rivals" (dismissing it in passing, with his usual harshness, as a "singularly inept comedy"), in which someone "cherishes her nails for the convenience of making marginal notes." Nabokov adds, puzzlingly, "The art is a lost one today." Hardly so: even with a closely clipped and manly thumbnail, the reader can and very often does, today, in America, score a visible double line to mark an interesting passage, if it appears in a book that he is prevented for one reason or another from defacing. In those midnight moments of the misplaced pencil, too, a nail impression is a less destructive and more spatially precise aid to memory than a turned-down corner. Moreover, the pressure of the reader's nail, deformed by its momentary trenchancy, against the tender hyponychial tissues it protects creates a transient thumbwide pleasure that is, or can be, more than literary.

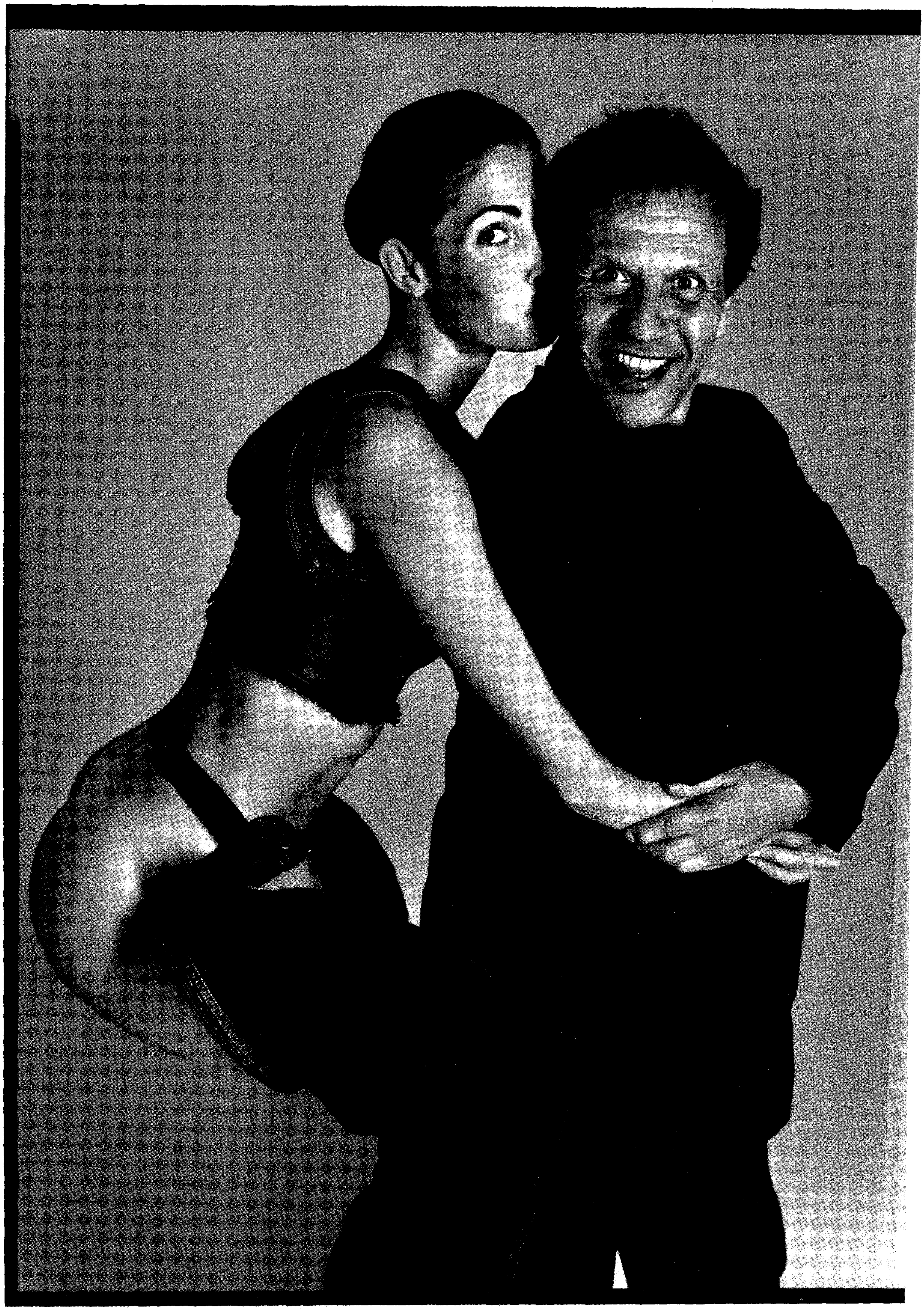
But the most troubling feature of Stephen King's assessment of my alleged "nail paring" of a novel is his apparent belief that a bookish toe- or fingernail scrap can be justifiably brushed off as meaningless. Last September, Allen Ginsberg sold a bag of his beard hair to Stanford. Surely Mr. King ought to be saving for the ages whatever gnarled relics he clips or pares? And the Master Spellbinder, of all people, should be able to detect the secret terrors, the moans of the severed but unquiet soul, that reside in these disjecta. Think of the fearful Norse ship of the apocalypse, Naglfar, made of dead men's nails, which will break loose from its moorings during the Monstrous Winter, when the Wolf has swallowed the Sun—"a warning," in Brian Branston's retelling, "that if a man dies with his nails unshorn he is adding greatly to the materials for Naglfar (a thing both gods and men would be slow to do)." Gertrude Jobes's mythological dictionary cites a related Finno-Ugric tradition in which the Evil One collects any Sunday nail parings and "with them builds the boat for transporting the dead." Lithuanian folklore contends (per Stith Thompson) that "from the parings of man's nails devils make little caps for themselves." I didn't have a chance to ask any of the employees at the factory in Derby, Connecticut, many of whom are first- or second-generation Polish, whether they had heard similar tales.

Lest someone unknowingly aid the devils in their hattery (would a fingernail hat resemble a miniature wicker knickknack basket, one wonders, or would the snippets be sewn or glued on, like sequins?), the Bassett Company, in 1990, launched the Easy Hold clipper. The Easy Hold line features an unusual pair of ambidextrous cuticle scissors, with forefinger-rests that aid fine work (U.S. Design Patent No. 331,867); a foam emery-board holder; and an enhanced tweezer that makes the removal of other people's splinters even more of a wicked joy than it always has been. But the new nail clippers go further: in addition to a considerate plastic thumb element, they include a housing for the jaw which catches nearly every snippet the moment it is clipped.



ERIC ROMMERDALE, the head of laboratory technology at the University of Mississippi School of Dentistry, in Jackson, is the unexpected principal figure behind the development of all the Easy Hold grooming products. Mr. Rommerdale, fifty-two, a white-mustached ex-Navy man, is no stranger to inventive self-care, having in his off-hours developed Sunbeam's triple-brush, hands-free toothbrushing system (now sold by DKI Inc.) and the mouth-stick-activated urine-bag release valve, both for the disabled. His big fingernail moment came in November, 1987, in a Stop-n-Go, while he was watching a man in his seventies with "hands the size of baseball mitts" trying to clip his nails. Three times the clipper fell to the floor. Out of polymer resin (often used in dental work) Rommerdale built a pair of add-on clipper grips and tried to interest Revlon in them. Revlon said no, unequivocally. But in 1988 William Bassett the younger listened to a pitch by Rommerdale in the lobby of the Bridgeport Hilton, liked what he heard, and asked the inventor to rethink the graspability of the entire manicure line. The University of Mississippi Medical Center then evaluated and refined the prototypes (under a grant from the Bassett Company), videotaping and surveying a group of talkative elderly beta-testers.

Although Rommerdale's original rounded design gained, in its final, blister-packed form, a few unwelcome projections and some squared-off edges that cry out for smoothing ("We could have done a better job on that," William Bassett admits), it is nonetheless heartening to find that the stylistic history of the clipper—one of the great bureau-top products of the century—is far from over. This coming January, all plastic Easy Hold fittings, presently colored a battleship gray, will turn teal green, after extensive mall-site interviewing. Eric Rommerdale, using his patent royalties, recently expanded his back-yard workshop, and he is currently developing safer tools for meat cutters and a jar opener for the disabled. It seems there is still time for all of us to clip our nails closely and carefully before the coming of the Monstrous Winter, when Naglfar will set sail. ♦



IN THE WORKROOM

THE OUTSIDER

Azzedine Alaïa doesn't show at the collections, and he doesn't deliver when the other designers do. He doesn't even believe in the idea of "seasons."

BY INGRID SISCHY

IT'S midafternoon at the house of Azzedine Alaïa, on the Rue de la Verrerie, in Paris. Most of the twenty-five people who work here, together with some drop-in guests, have finished a home-cooked lunch, served in a cramped upstairs kitchen—a room too small to fit a sink in, and where the diners have to eat in shifts. Twenty minutes ago, Alaïa, the boss and owner and resident artist, was sitting there, entertaining the gang. Now everyone is back at his or her station—dealing with the press, the manufacturers, the buyers; selling; sewing; ironing—and the phones are ringing off the hook. Nobody knows where Alaïa is. He's not at the wooden table in the loftlike work space where he usually sits, making clothes, often while chatting on a cordless phone; and his three main assistants, now grouped together at their table, across the room, look like children left to recover after a parent they dote on has stormed out—which is pretty much what has just happened.

A fashion magazine that wanted to photograph some of Alaïa's latest designs had asked his assistants to select some clothes and put them aside for a messenger. For almost any other establishment in the fashion business, a request like this would be a reason to send the editor flowers. But Alaïa nixed the pickup, for reasons of his own. When his assistants warned him of the repercussions, the politest part of Alaïa's answer was "Screw the magazine!" And off he marched—a dark, curly-haired, Napoleon-size man who looks a little like Gertrude Stein—followed by several other important pint-size members of the design team: Ouabo and Barouf (two Yorkies), Pitchoun (a poodle), and Ali and Noura (Persian cats that are described in this household as "the color of crème brûlée").

For the last fifteen years or so, Alaïa has essentially been a misfit in the fashion business. His clothes have a way of arriving in the stores later than other designers' clothes—if they arrive at all, that is. Alaïa hasn't done a runway show for a couple of years now, and even when he did do the shows, they took place when Alaïa was good and ready, and not during the official collection weeks. Alaïa's hands-on approach, his complete involvement in every detail of his atelier and of the manufacture of his clothes, can cause interminable, maddening delays. To some in the business, his manner of doing things makes him seem impossible, an incurable procrastinator who uses perfectionism as a cover for an inability to produce regularly and on time. To others, his unpredictable form of distribution makes Alaïa's clothes all the more highly prized when they finally turn up. Gene Pressman, the co-president of Barney's, which is now the only outlet in New York for Alaïa's clothes, says, "We're usually very rigid when it comes to deliveries. He's the only exception. I basically don't give a damn when it comes as long as it does. Whenever it arrives, I'll take it, because he doesn't make mistakes. He makes classics."

As far as Alaïa is concerned, his approach is simply part of a long-standing resistance to the fashion machine. In the last few years, he has expanded his position into a philosophy, saying that he doesn't believe in the idea of "seasons." When you talk to Alaïa about fashion, his constant refrain is that there's something both sick and antiquated about it. He believes that the pressure to come up with new styles is destructive to design-

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD AVEDON

Azzedine Alaïa with Stephanie Seymour, Paris, September 16, 1994.

ers, and that it turns women off. And he maintains that the old idea of clothes for winter and clothes for summer is based on an outdated notion of how people live.

Alaïa didn't create a collection for last summer. And although he has produced a new collection for this fall and winter, it is entering the fashion world at that special protracted Alaïa pace: it will be ready "next week." He says, "It's like fruit—it's not ripe before it's ripe." Because he has been out of the spotlight lately, his future has become even more of a public question in the fashion world. Such speculation has gone on for years, inspiring headlines like "HAS-BEEN ALAÏA." Some people have even invoked the example of Charles James, a talented designer of the forties and fifties who became so obsessed with his creations that he ended up penniless, alone, and half mad. But the debate doesn't bother Alaïa. When I asked him how he felt about all the rumors, he said, "I don't care about any of that. As far as my work is concerned, it's always been the same. The struggles that obsess me are whether a sleeve fits properly, whether I have the length right, whether a fabric works in all the ways that it should. The challenge is how to make the clothes."

I had been told by many people in the fashion community that Alaïa has experienced serious money troubles but that I shouldn't ask about them, because he'd either become furious or else deny them completely. I brought up the topic with Christoph von Weyhe, a painter who has lived with Alaïa for decades and is his general manager. What von Weyhe told me sounded typical of many entrepreneurial operations that flourished in the eighties: the cycle began with success, which was followed by overextension; when the recession hit, business fell by about thirty per cent, and it has only begun to pick up. Meanwhile, there have been tax claims and other financial pressures. In 1987, with sales at a peak, Alaïa bought the headquarters that he now inhabits. His place, in the Marais, is one of the most beautiful environments in Paris; it consists of three buildings, the largest of which has a neoclassical façade and a Belle Époque interior, and contains two Alaïa boutiques. But after renovations got under way it turned out that the project cost much more than was anticipated.

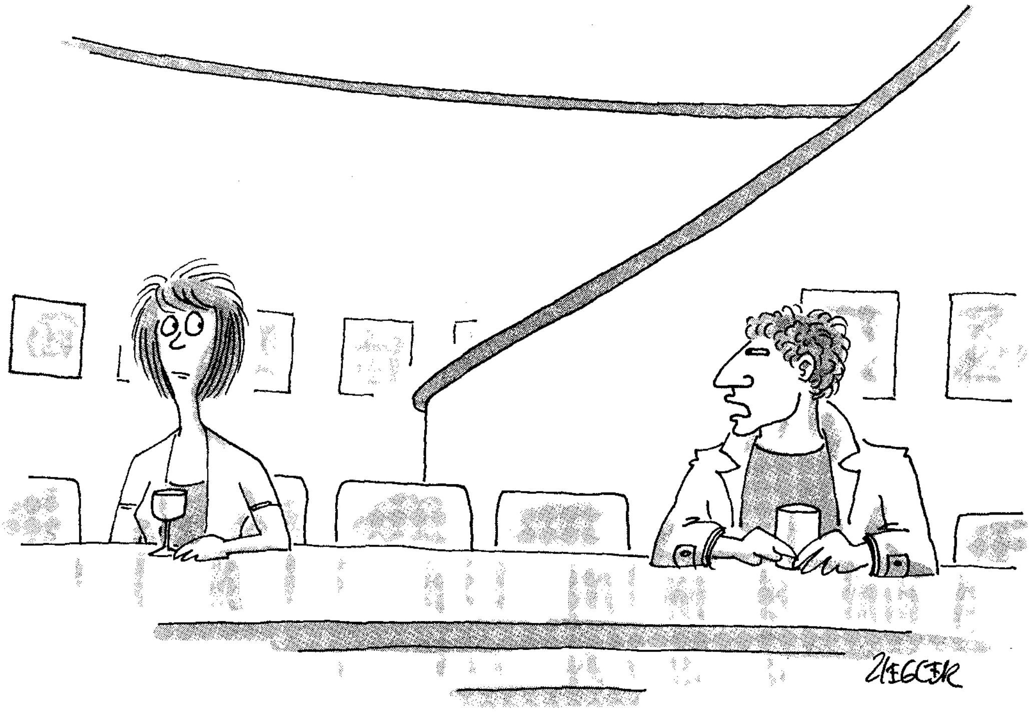
On top of all this, von Weyhe said, Azzedine's sister had become sick. "He was very close to her," he added. "After she left nursing, she managed his boutique on the Rue de Bellechasse, and lived with us in her last years. When she died of cancer, in 1992, he didn't want to make a huge runway show. And since then he hasn't done any of those lavish productions. That year, the collection was even later than usual, because he was so sad. It was a very difficult period. Plus, the tax audit had begun. I think that the money Azzedine got when he sold the house we lived in before, on the Rue du Parc-Royal, complicated this audit. They claimed we owed about a million dollars, which we're contesting. But this procedure can take ten years, and meanwhile the assessment is public. So probably that's another reason people are saying we're in trouble."

Alaïa had come in while von Weyhe and I were talking, and now, dressed in his customary black Chinese work clothes, he sat down, pushed the phone aside, picked up some pins, and said, "No financier can put his hands on me. I prefer to stop working rather than to have someone lean on me. I have no backers. I work a lot, but I don't like obligation. I don't like what it does to people. If I really wanted to make money, there are a lot of houses I could sign a contract with tomorrow, but it's not in my temperament to make money for doing a few rags. I will work to pay my bills, but if that doesn't pan out, I don't care. It's not having a big house that counts. It's almost perverse on my part to have this big place. It's important for me to learn other things. I want to spend time with painters and writers that I meet. If that means the collection will be a little bit late, I don't care—the customers won't die if they get it late. In real life, people are dying from real things. When I think of a professor, or of a researcher, who earns such small amounts he doesn't even have enough to finance his work, then I think that what the fashion business earns is blood money. The question of my financial situation doesn't bother me. I love risk. It gives me more ideas. I can work in a maid's room. Here I live in this big house, but I am always at this table or in the tiny workrooms, or in the little kitchen—not in the grand one that we made downstairs. I sleep with the dogs, surrounded by boxes. In any case, in one manner or another, there is always an end. It goes down. It goes up. It goes down. It lasts for no one."

One reason for Alaïa's slowness may be that, unlike many designers who deliver on a schedule, Alaïa does almost all the work himself. He cuts all the patterns, for example, and does all the fittings and much of the sewing. He even does maintenance and repair. When I was at his atelier recently, he vanished, as usual, right in the middle of a conversation, and the usual search began. Eventually, I found him hunched over a table in one of the hole-in-the-wall rooms behind the upstairs kitchen, stitching away on a 1989 baby-doll dress, made mostly of tulle and dyed bronze pearls. He was trying to perk up the right breast of the dress while one of the matronly seamstresses who work for him was repairing the left. Once in a while, they'd laugh, because of the difficulties of executing such detailed work in close quarters. "We are working on Naomi Campbell's boobs, so of course we keep bumping into each other!" he said.

Like a number of supermodels, Campbell has a long history with Alaïa. In her early days, in the late eighties, she slept on his floor; she still calls him Papa, as do many others whom he's close to. Alaïa was working on the dress because Campbell had just come to Paris for a TV appearance promoting the release of her first record, and had called him to say, "Papa, choose something for me for tonight." Alaïa was taking great care with the dress, but he also had time for devilishness. He giggled and said that he was going to leave some pins in, so that when Campbell sat down she'd remember Papa. That evening, we watched Campbell on TV. Alaïa leaned over to me and whispered, "The bra isn't on right. And she doesn't need that necklace. It's much less beautiful than her brown skin. *C'est dommage!* I should be there all the time."

The next night, Campbell came by, and we all ended up looking at some videotapes of past Alaïa shows, with Campbell providing a commentary. When one of her particularly curvaceous colleagues appeared on the screen, she



"Maybe you recognize me. I'm the really naked guy in those Gianni Versace ads."

• •

remarked, "Forget the Wonderbra—Papa does the best bras, because they've got this double padding." Campbell's comments reminded me of why I'd resisted Alaïa's clothes back in the mid-eighties, when he was dubbed the King of Cling. They were so tightly molded that they seemed to turn women into Jessica Rabbit, and they appeared to trade on all the wrong things: the backlash against feminism, the power of aggression, the power of looking powerful. But I hadn't then seen the full and varied range of Alaïa's clothes—in part, of course, because what was being photographed for the magazines didn't show it. Eventually, though, I began to meet more and more women who swore that Alaïa's clothes fitted them better than any others, and I began to see that there was more to Alaïa than clinginess and an appeal to male expectations. The truth is that these clothes give women pleasure, too. Pleasure, not political correctness, is the key to Alaïa's fashion. But it's a mistake to assume that his clothes are only for those who have a good body, or a desire to show off their anatomy. Lots of his designs are happily worn by women whose age or shape would disqualify them from the runway.

AZZEDINE ALAÏA was born in Tunisia, sometime around 1940. It's impossible to be more precise, because he refuses to help out with dates. He says, "Don't ask me when I was born, and don't ask when I die." Against the wishes of his father, who was a wheat farmer, he went to L'École des Beaux-Arts in Tunis, earning the money for his supplies by working for a seamstress who lived nearby. At art school, Alaïa was encouraged to be a sculptor, and a sculptor's sensibility runs through much of what he has done in fashion. But his real aim was to go to Paris and learn couture. He moved there in 1957, hardly an opportune moment: France was embroiled in Algeria's struggle for independence, and Alaïa was an outsider on almost every front, beginning with the color of his skin. On his second day in Paris, he got a job at Dior, and worked there five days, until they told him he didn't have a work permit. Alaïa thinks that he was actually fired because of anti-Algerian prejudice.

He had no work, and almost no money. Starting at the bottom, he found a room on the first floor of a large apartment house on the Rue Lord-Byron, where he delivered mail and filled in for the concierge in return for a break on the rent. He had some letters of introduction through Tunisian connections, and he was able to meet a few wealthy women. Soon he was living in the maids' rooms of their apartments, helping out with the cooking and babysitting, and sometimes he made clothes for the women and their friends. Alaïa often mentions his gratitude to these women—especially the Comtesse Nicole de Blegiers, who is the wife of a prominent businessman, and whose apartment he lived in for five years.

In 1960, Alaïa went to work for Guy Laroche, in the women's suit studio, while he continued to build a private clientele for his couture. Then, in the mid-sixties, one of his staunch supporters, Mme. Simone Zehrfuss, the wife of the architect Bernard Zehrfuss (he was in charge of the reconstruction of much of Tunisia), helped him to rent an apartment on the Rue de Bellechasse, which became his first formal atelier. His popularity among the Paris élite didn't protect him from social insults. Sometimes when he was making deliveries a concierge wouldn't let him in; at other times, he was told to use the servants' entrance. Once in a while, he would cause a scene. "*Non, Madame!*" he'd say, and push his way through the door. By 1980, however, his customers included Jeanne Moreau, Arletty, and Claudette Colbert. One day when an assistant told him that Greta Garbo was outside with one of his biggest clients, Cécile de Rothschild, he thought it was a joke—exactly the kind of joke he likes to play on other people. But it really was Garbo, and he made her a heavy navy-blue overcoat and a severe jersey tunic; Christoph von Weyhe stood in for Garbo at the fittings.

Alaïa himself is not above playing the old-fashioned star. He keeps his audience waiting for his clothes, and can get offended if anyone complains. He likes to mimic a diva, saying, "I am married to my public." In a recent collection, he paid homage to the old days with a butterfly theme inspired by Arletty's butterfly dress in the 1940 movie

"Tempête." But he also has strong connections to certain of today's icons, who go to him because of the way his designs enhance their allure. In the early eighties, for example, he made some dramatic leather bolero jackets and dresses out of metal rings for Tina Turner, who had recently decided to go it alone as a performer. Photographs from that time show Alaïa accompanying Turner to high-profile events, and holding her hand tightly, as if he were a good-luck elf. (He seems to love the contrast between him and his tall muses, many of whom have been black women.)

Most of the press that Alaïa has received has made the point of how sexy and provocative his clothes are. But many of his pieces possess qualities that are at the opposite extreme—nobility and purity. When you ask Alaïa about the women's fashions that impressed him as he was growing up, he remembers two startlingly disparate images. In one, he is about seven years old and has been taken to a brothel by his cousin. As he tells the story, you hear all about the petticoats and underwear that the women had on—the lace, and the bras with gold flowers embroidered on them. Then he tells you about walking his sister to convent school, and about being struck by the beauty of the white habit worn by Sister Thérèse, the nun who opened the school door. Sometimes he does a design that looks like a meeting between these extremes. A dress that he made for Grace Jones, which she wore when she accompanied him to the Fashion Oscars, in Paris, in 1985, was inspired by Egyptian mummies: it consisted of strips of purple non-stretch acetate that wrapped around her like a bandage but opened in jagged gaps up one side.

Alaïa went public, so to speak, in 1980, with his first official prêt-à-porter collection. He'd been planning for some time to move on from the one-of-a-kind couture business, and had even put on some small shows in his apartment. A couple of years earlier, he'd also produced a mostly leather collection—including garments punched with metal-ringed eyelets—for Charles Jourdan. Jourdan rejected it all. Alaïa kept the ideas and now was able to send them out under his own label. These outfits, together with studded muslin skirts, studded leather gloves, and some form-fitting dresses that mixed bathing-suit material with jersey, proved especially popular with the Parisian fashion community, and their success, in the early eighties, marked Alaïa's entry into the spotlight. But it wasn't until he started to perfect his infamous stretch outfits, using Lycra and wool, that he became a true star. He'd given a clue that he was headed in this direction with some earlier knits that, because of their pliancy and his inventive use of zippers, seemed to peel around the body. The newer outfits took full advantage of Alaïa's understanding and advancement of the technology behind stretch fabrics. In retrospect, one can see these clothes as an expression of an idealized, warrior version of the female form—bodybuilding without the gym.

Technology has been crucial to Alaïa for years now. He often invents his own fabrics, working with a factory in Florence, which he uses as a kind of lab, and with a knitwear mill in Vicenza, which does the actual manufacturing. Boiled wool has become a signature of his. He recently came up with a new way of weaving wool and Lycra together, and then boiling it to make stretchy dresses and tops so intricately layered and pierced with holes that they seem like mosaics. And for a while now he has been experimenting with an even lighter, softer fibre—one that he imagined would "feel like a powder puff." It's made mostly of acetate, and comes in three lengths: a low pile, called *houppette;* a thicker one, called *cygne* (for swansdown); and a hairy version, called *singe,* that resembles monkey fur. In his cutting basket there are swaths of fabric that look like the sweepings from a poodle parlor, and others that suggest particularly luxurious bathmats. Last year, Alaïa incorporated *houppette* into his body-hugging stretch dresses and bodices, creating clothes that were both memorable and sly. Some of the outfits made the women in them look like fabulously colored caterpillars—caterpillars with good legs.

FOR all the sophistication that goes into Alaïa's fashion, there's nothing highfalutin about him. He has done what many others seem to forget when they become big deals: he has stayed in touch with what's happening on the street. Some of his fashion almost makes a point of this link; he has done skirts and jackets that flip up at the back in a Parisian way, as if to say, "Follow me, *garçon!*" A collection he did for the summer of 1991 was inspired, at Julian Schnabel's suggestion, by the checked awning of the Tati department store, on the Boulevard Barbès. He used the awning's houndstooth pattern in many colors and in a variety of sizes, from puppy-tooth to sabre-tooth, and the result was a cheerful, frisky salute to popular culture.

Alaïa himself keeps an open door, as it were, for all those who in one way or another breathe the same air that he does. Among the visitors who drop by frequently are fashion editors, who want to see what he's up to and also want to be fitted for Alaïa clothes of their own. It's striking how often his work appears in magazines, especially since Alaïa doesn't advertise, and so he has none of the leverage that gives some designers an almost tyrannical hold over editors afraid of losing ad pages.

Alaïa's latest collection, which is just starting to make its way into the stores, is smaller and less aggressive than some of his past work. There are adaptations of cowboy outfits, which reflect his love of American folk culture. There are knits and thin tweeds that are suitable for both summer and winter. And there are more boiled-wool clothes, including suits, with outer vests, that don't seem to refer to any era—something almost unheard of in fashion. Still other wool clothes have a horizontal linear pattern that has been embroidered into the garment and then subjected to a boiling process, which makes them resemble Roman armor. Armor, perhaps, against the system of fashion itself. At a time when any ambitious designer is expected to spin himself off endlessly—into fragrances and underwear and placemats—Alaïa wants something so simple that it seems radical. He wants to make clothes. He reminds me of a song from one of his favorite Egyptian films. It goes:

> Maman, Maman, the moon
> suffers. . . .
> Maman, Maman, the moon is at the
> front door.
> Should I invite her in, or should I
> shut the door? ◆

Stephanie Seymour in one of Azzedine Alaïa's 1985 "mummy" dresses, Paris, September 16, 1994.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FEMININE FASHIONS

Lois Long, a.k.a. Lipstick, was a bright young thing from Vassar who, in 1925, became The New Yorker's first guide to the fashionable world—a post she held for forty-five years. In the following excerpts, written around the time of the Second World War, she addresses the stylish American woman's appropriate response to a changing world.

BY LOIS LONG

The sexes are getting along so peacefully that I cannot help lying awake and worrying. It is too much to expect that woman, naturally suspicious and hostile, can continue to be docile when her man expresses his wishes about her clothes. Or that some cloud won't blot out the sunshine of masculine approval—I might even say liking—of the way we dress at the moment.

After years of research, I have found out only a few things about men, but one is that they seem to like us to be simple and trig, but pert, in the daytime; lush and feminine, and either fluffy or rustling, at night. And, sticking together, as usual, they are inclined to like black. So the shops have large selections of plain black dresses, which are saved from being lugubrious by having square-shouldered short sleeves; zippers down the ribs, to hug the figure; and skirts short enough to show the legs. Many of the necklines are high across the front, and males occasionally wail that these are not alluring, but most of them realize we are trying and are content. Dresses like this are the perfect background for accessories, for we are taking up the Continental idea of varying dresses with bags, gloves, and jewels (but not as many jewels as Mrs. Simpson uses, please. That's the one place where she slips up). It all makes men smile as they recall their very first French countess in Paris, long ago.

January 30, 1937.

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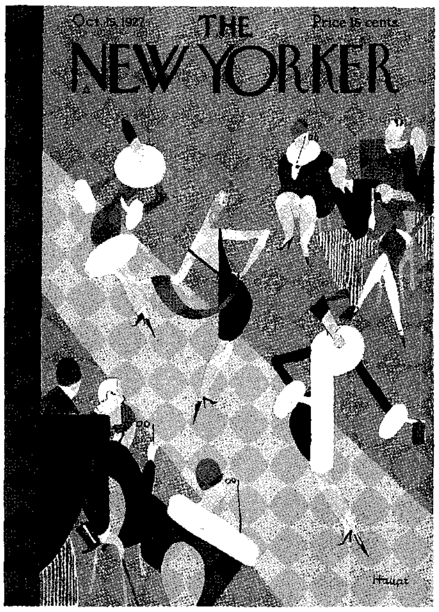

A large proportion of our population seems to spend an inordinate amount of emotional energy in a state of amazement and chagrin at the fact that men and women are created in different molds, a fact which you'd think would be taken for granted after all these centuries. In an effort to help suspend the battle of the sexes for the duration, I herewith present my two cents' worth on the question of uniforms for women volunteer workers.

I feel that uniforms should not be worn by women until they have been really earned. They should never be worn by girls who gush that they simply must give their *all*, my dear, and haven't had time yet to learn how hard it is to get to a volunteers' office at 9 A.M. after dancing for charity with the lads in the fighting services until three in the morning. Uniforms look fine on women on active duty, I think (but won't somebody *please* do something about eliminating those men's collars and arrogant black ties?); in a cocktail bar, however, they merit charges of exhibitionism. It is also a fact that a man, particularly if he is reluctantly a civilian, is inclined to be less than sentimental about a dinner partner whose clothes make her look as if she could break him at any time across her competent knee. As our hours of leisure shorten, it is essential that they should be made as charming as possible, and you can't have charm without women who have learned how to conceal the iron in their characters. Which is why I feel that now, more than ever, uniforms should be firmly confined to the hours when there is work to be done. Between times, in the evening, there should be sheer lace and chiffon and heady perfume; in the daytime, meticulously tailored suits and dresses, made very feminine by the silliest of hats and the frothiest of lingerie at the throat.

After all, there can be such a thing as women taking their duties so seriously that nobody will *want* them for the mothers of the next generation. And, as I pointed out in the beginning, Nature is still against our being the fathers.

January 24, 1942.

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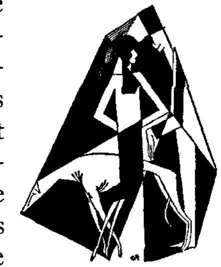
When I first visited Hollywood, five or six years back, I was baffled by the reactions of the designers there. No red carpets and low salaams greeted this eminent New York fashion authority; instead, the boys ran into storm cellars and cowered, shuddering lest I find a stray bangle or a bit of ostrich feather on the premises. Their terror was understandable, since for years it had been the habit of New York publications to judge Hollywood taste as if it were still in the gaudy old Mack Sennett days, when new-rich cuties picked out a pink tulle with rosebuds and blithely wore it to lunch. The designers out there had been pounded so vigorously by the critics for



such innocent goings on that they were suffering from as neat a case of persecution mania as I have ever witnessed. They wouldn't let themselves look at any fabric that wasn't black, navy, or gray. The mention of the work "tulle" set them to shivering. They were a pathetic sight.

I was no help to these embittered artists, either. There was a heat wave, but it was also October, and so down the golden streets paraded women sweltering in plain black wool dresses and fur jackets. New York was in the midst of autumn, so nobody on the Coast dared to wear a print. I thought this attitude was nonsense and said so in positive, dorothythompson prose, pointing out that clothes which would look well on gray New York streets were not necessarily smart in a city of sunshine and white stucco and bougainvillaea.

As a result of all the snide talk in the East, several of the hypersensitive designers out West began to mumble of suicide pacts. Their paranoia was complete. But when Paris fell in 1940 and was no longer able to dictate terms for anything, even skirt lengths, it was the Manhattan critics' turn to cower. Where, oh where, were the new fashions to come from? What would Seventh Avenue copy for milady? Desperately, assorted experts rushed to Hollywood to beg the assorted geniuses there please to be, at once, the fashion centre of the world. (There was still a notion that fashion centres could be wished into existence. What an age we lived in!)

The Hollywood designers, doting on the situation in which they found themselves, snubbed New York to a fare-thee-well. They were busy, they said. Some had studio contracts—very wearing. Some had important customers in Pasadena and Santa Barbara who paid their bills regularly. Sniffing grandly, both varieties suggested that Seventh Avenue dig up some ideas of its own. They weren't impolite. They said nothing coarse or rude. They never pointed out that Paris had had a Mae West flurry which did not originate on the banks of the Seine, or that Miss Joan Crawford had already been something of a fashion dictator herself in various Fifth Avenue débutante departments, or that several "new" haircuts brought over from Europe looked a lot like some of Miss Garbo's earlier ones. They were most courteous, but, thanks, they weren't having any when it came to solving New York's crisis.

April 4, 1942.

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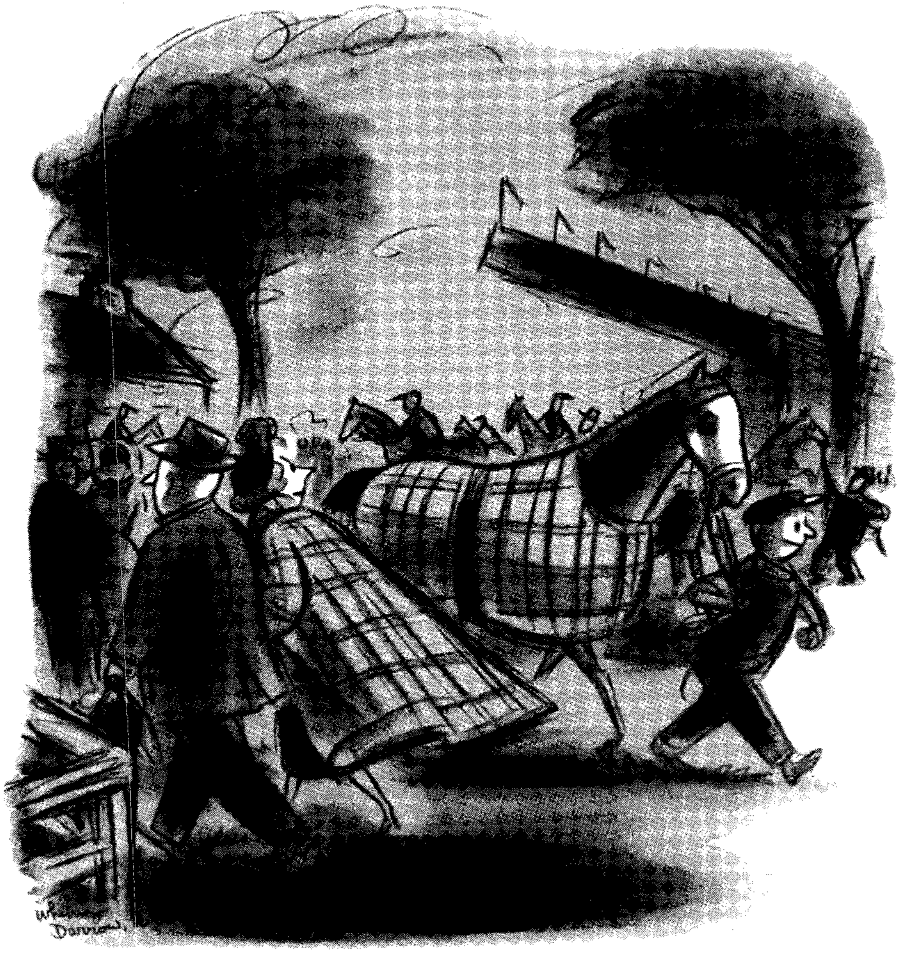
EVERY once in a while I let fly a benign statement to the effect that women are nice people, really, when you get to know them. The consequences of such statements are always dire. Women seemingly become so puffed up with this praise that they rush right out and do something unaesthetic or idiotic. The latest aberration to tear down my contention that women have taste and sense has been the advent of slacks on city streets, miles from either factories or beaches.



This emphatically must stop. I have spoken. There isn't one woman in two hundred who looks as well in slacks as in skirts, the conformation of the sex being what it is; there isn't one job in fifty that can't be done with equal decency and greater comfort in skirts. And for that fifty-first job, a coverall like a mechanic's is handier, cooler, and more efficient than pants and a sweater.

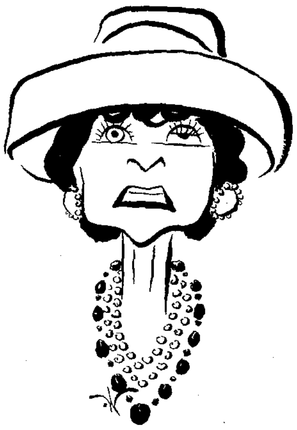
To begin with, I think it can be safely stated that the male figure, particularly in back, is more adapted to the wearing of pants than the female one. Even so, men have the good sense to wear jackets, cut below the line of their almost nonexistent hips and covering the place where they sit down. If you knit them a sweater, they usually don't tuck it in at the waist, and you can never get it long enough to please them. Women, though less favored structurally by Nature, insist on tucking in their shirts and buying waist-length sweaters, and seem to take masochistic pleasure in being seen (and even photographed) from the rear. It passes my understanding.

To be sure, you'll see women in Hollywood and a few rangy, long-legged tailored types in the East who look very fine in slacks suits, but you'll notice that the things they wear are tailored to the hilt. The Hollywood women, of course,

COCO CHANEL

BY LILLIAN ROSS

WE'VE met some formidable charmers in our time, but none to surpass the great couturière and perfumer Mlle. Gabrielle Chanel, who came out of retirement three years ago to present a collection of dress and suit designs that have begun to affect women's styles every bit as powerfully as her designs of thirty-odd years ago did. At seventy-four, Mlle. Chanel is sensationally good-looking, with dark-brown eyes, a brilliant smile, and the unquenchable vitality of a twenty-year-old, and when, giving us a firm handshake, she said, "I am *très, très fatiguée*," it was with the assurance of a woman who knows she can afford to say it. Since the Chanel look is causing such a stir these days, we took particular note of what its begetter was wearing: a natural-colored straw sailor hat; a natural-colored silk suit, with box jacket and straight skirt; a white silk blouse, with gold cuff links; low-heeled brown-and-white shoes; and plenty of jewelry—a pearl hatpin, pearls and diamonds in her ears, ropes of pearls about her neck, and, on her jacket, an enormous brooch of antique gold studded with rubies, emeralds, and diamonds.



MICHAEL WITTE

"The brooch is of my design, and the dress is nothing, *très simple*," she said. "The cuff links were given to me by Stravinsky, thirty years ago. The occasion? Admiration, of course—the admiration *I* bore *him!*"

We lighted a cigarette for Mlle. Chanel and asked her how she had happened to be in retirement so long. Her brown eyes flashed. "Never was I really in retirement in my heart," she said. "Always, I observed the new clothes. At last, quietly, calmly, with great determination, I began working on *une belle collection*. When I showed it in Paris, I had many critics. They said that I was old-fashioned, that I was no longer of the age. Always I was smiling inside my head, and I thought, I will show them. Now, in France, they are trying to adapt my ideas. So much the better! But when I see some things they call 'after *la mode Chanel*,' I protest vigorously. There are no potato sacks among my dresses!

"I must tell you something of significance. Fashion is always of the time in which you live. It is not something standing alone. The problem of fashion in 1925 was different. Women were just beginning to go to work in offices. I inspired the cutting of the hair short because it goes with the modern woman. To the woman going to work, I said to take off the bone corset, because women cannot work while they are imprisoned in a corset. I invented the tweed for sports and the loose-fitting sweater and blouse. I encouraged women to be well groomed and to like perfume—a woman who is badly perfumed is not a woman!"

Mlle. Chanel flicked the ash off the last inch of her cigarette, which she held pinched between the thumb and forefinger of her left hand. "Women have always been the strong ones of the world," she said. "The men are always seeking from women a little pillow to put their heads down on. They are always longing for the mother who held them as infants. It is just my opinion. I am not a professor. I am not a preacher. I speak my opinions gently. It is the truth for me. I am not young, but I feel young. The day I feel old, I will go to bed and stay there. *J'aime la vie!* I feel that to live is a wonderful thing."

September 28, 1957. ◆

are movie people, who have to keep as slim as willow wands, with the result that they don't bulge enough to spoil that straight line down the hips which pants should have. They wear jackets as carefully tailored as those of their best tailleurs, and despite their naturally exceptional figures (which have been improved by diet and massage), the bill usually comes from a custom tailor. My spies have never yet seen Miss Katharine Hepburn within shouting distance of a rack filled with slacks costing $2.98.

May 2, 1942.

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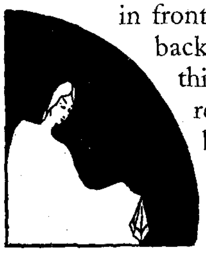
THOSE of us who were happy about the blossoming of American fashion talent during the years when there were no clothes from Paris had reason to feel both maddened and discouraged at the fashion collections last spring. There were still some new ideas, but too many clothes were ordinary to the point of being inane. This postwar slump seemed to indicate that we were ready to betray our new-found geniuses and give the whole business—designing, manufacturing, and all—back to the French. But the clothes this autumn are something else. Whether it is the infusion of Paris ideas, however screwy, or whether it is the old competitive spirit of our designers reasserting itself, the custom collections now being shown by our best houses are sometimes challenging, sometimes dire, and sometimes wonderful. Or, to keep on with the feverish terminology of the trade, they are Different.

It is probably no news to any of you that there is what can be called a trend toward longer skirts. For a year now, skirts have been so short that they revealed the unattractive bend at the back of the knee. Besides, sitting down in a tight, short skirt is an art few women have mastered, and a skirt that reaches two inches below the kneecap is far more graceful and maneuverable. Bergdorf Goodman has experimented with all kinds of skirt length. There are irregular hemlines that maybe ten inches from the floor in front and heel length in back. I had hoped that this old idea would not recur in my lifetime, but there's a saying that history teaches us nothing.



September 21, 1946. ◆

Dec. 9, 1939

THE NEW YORKER

Price 15 cents

THE STYLE COUNCIL

The group assembled here, on the eve of the spring, 1995, Milan fashion shows, dictates much about the clothes we see, buy, and wear. These editors and journalists are the "in" and "out" patrol of the fashion flock.

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY RICHARD AVEDON

From left to right:

Elizabeth Tilberis. Editor-in-chief of Harper's Bazaar; former editor-in-chief of British Vogue.

Suzy Menkes. Fashion editor of the International Herald Tribune and columnist for the Times.

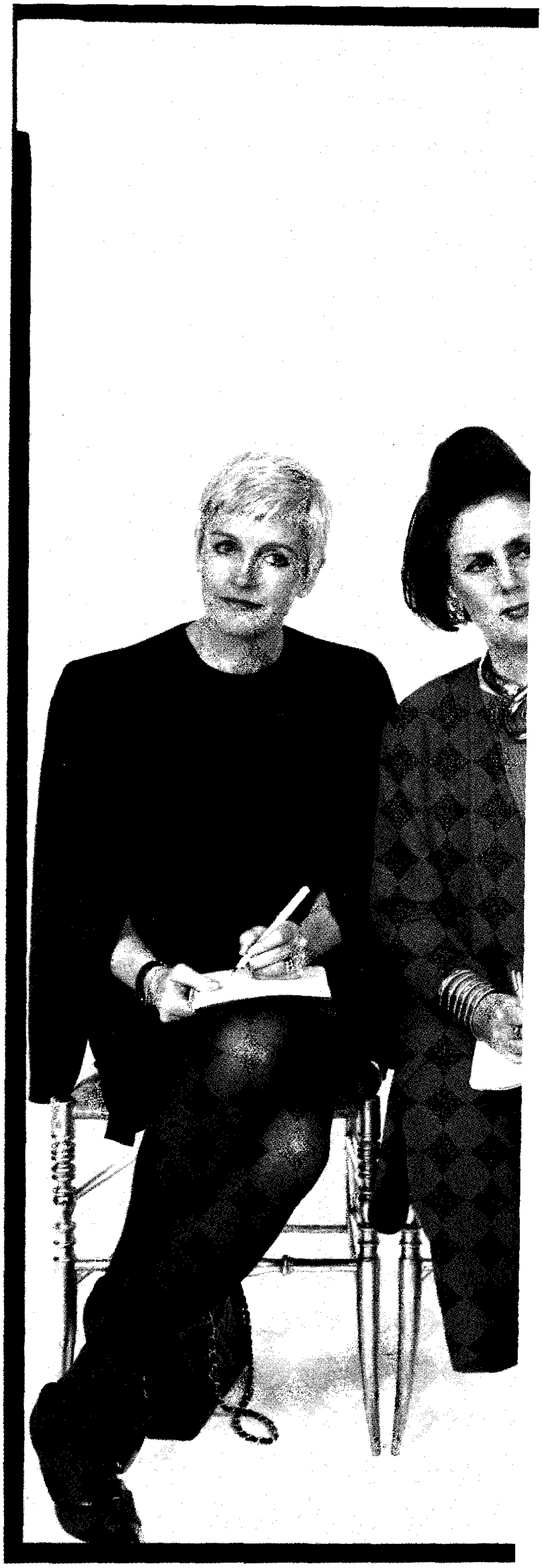
Franca Sozzani. Editor-in-chief of Italian Vogue; former editor-in-chief of Per Lui.

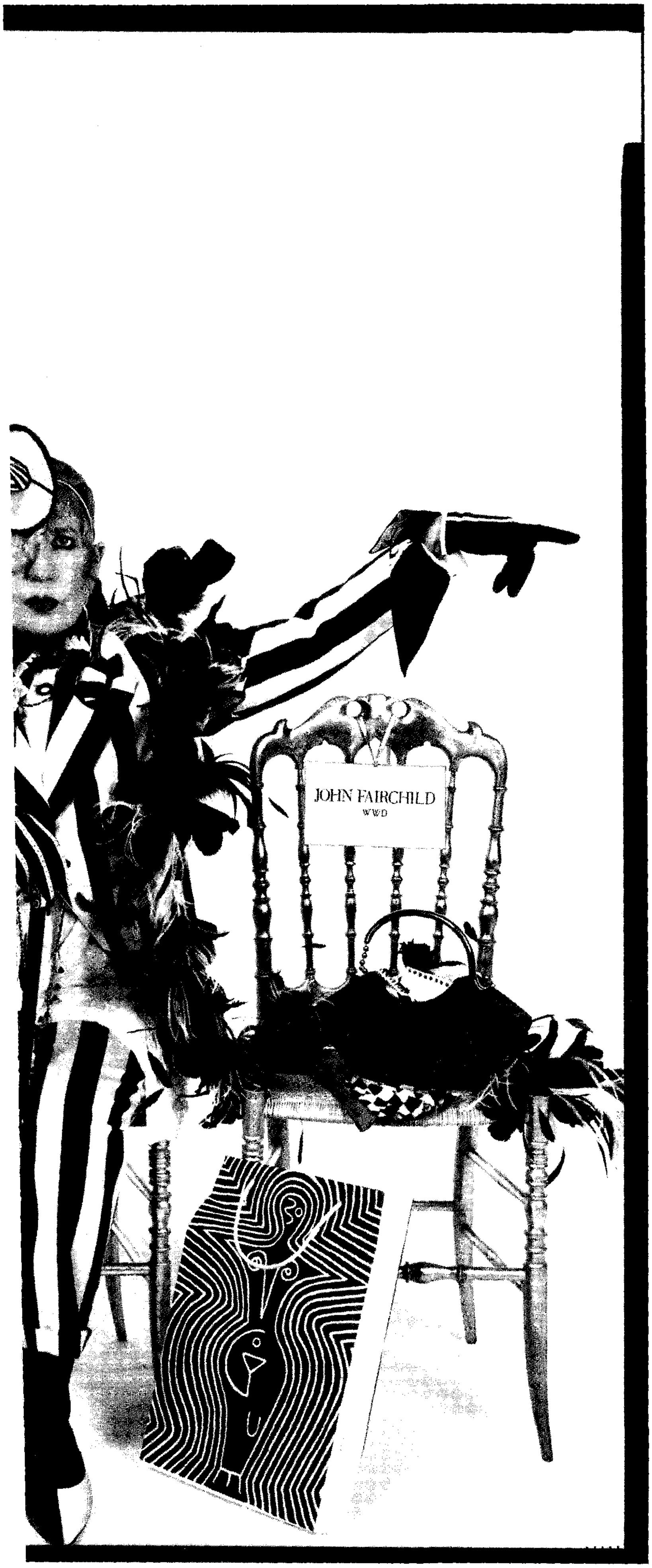
Joan Juliet Buck. Editor-in-chief of French Vogue; former contributing editor of Vanity Fair and Vogue and features editor of British Vogue.

Amy Spindler. Fashion reporter for the Times; former Paris editor of Women's Wear Daily and W and European editor of the Daily News Record.

Marina Schiano. Stylist and former model; former creative and style director of Vanity Fair and executive vice-president of Yves Saint Laurent. Contributor to this issue.

Grace Coddington. Fashion director of Vogue; former fashion editor of British Vogue and Calvin Klein Industries, Inc.





Polly Mellen. Creative director of Allure; protégée of Diana Vreeland at Harper's Bazaar; former fashion editor and fashion director of Vogue. Recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Council of Fashion Designers Association of America.

André Leon Talley. Creative director of Vogue; former creative director of HG, style reporter at large for Vanity Fair, and European bureau chief of Women's Wear Daily.

Regis Pagniez. Publication director of Elle; former art director of French Elle.

Anna Piaggi. Style editor of Italian Vogue and columnist for Panorama; former fashion editor of Arianna.

John Fairchild (stuck in traffic). Chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Fairchild Publications; chairman and editorial director of Women's Wear Daily and W. Author of "The Fashionable Savages"; recipient of the Grade de la Chevalier and the Légion d'Honneur.

Photographed in Milan, October 1, 1994.

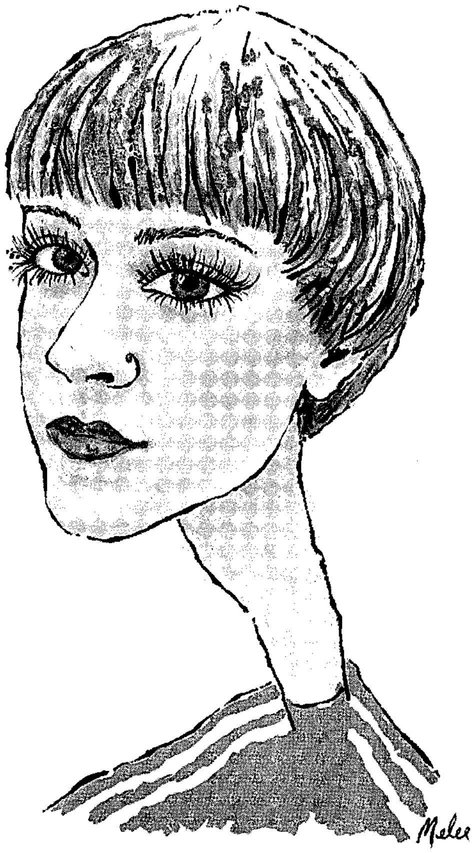
MANHATTAN DIARY

CHLOE'S SCENE

If you don't find your fashion on Seventh Avenue, Chloe is the It Girl with a street-smart style and a down-low attitude.

BY JAY McINERNEY

It's weird, this happens all the time. Chloe Sevigny is sitting at one of the outdoor tables at Stingy Lulu's, on St. Mark's Place just off Avenue A, absorbing a mixed green salad and devouring the just-out September *Vogue*. A black girl and an Asian girl huddle anxiously on the corner a few yards away, checking her out. The two are about Chloe's age, which is nineteen, and they seem to be debating whether or not to approach. Do they recognize her from the Sonic Youth video—the one filmed in Marc Jacobs' showroom, which was kind of a spoof of the whole grunge thing—or did they catch her modelling the X-Girl line last spring? Maybe they saw her photos in *Details*, the ones taken by Larry Clark, who has just cast Chloe in his new movie, "Kids." The girls pass by once and walk halfway up the block before they turn back, clinging to each other, and stop just behind Chloe's right shoulder.



"Chloe," one friend says, "is a pure Edie Sedgwick."

"Excuse me."

Chloe looks up, wrapping her arms tight around herself in an instinctive gesture of protection, as if to reduce the exposed surface area of her body even as she manages a smile that is shy and skeptical and indulgent all at the same time. It's not like this hasn't happened before, but it's still a little, you know, weird.

"Can you, um, tell us where you got your, uh, shoes?" the black girl asks.

Chloe giggles with relief. She looks down at her jellies—transparent plastic sandals. Now that practically *everybody's* wearing big, chunky, cleated boots and platform sneakers—even people who shlump every day to offices uptown—Chloe has moved on. She's already gone. And the two girls standing on the sidewalk in their big black Doc Martens want to follow her. Chloe tries to remember where she got the sandals. "I think it's right around the corner, on Avenue A. I can't think of the name. Something Something."

"Like, that way? Over there?"

"Yeah."

The girls thank her and practically run up the street. Chloe fires up a Camel Light and resumes her study of *Vogue*. Watching Chloe read a fashion magazine makes you think of Alexander Woollcott devouring a ten-pound lobster *à l'américaine* or Casanova undressing a servant girl. "This Marc Jacobs dress is beautiful. . . . Helmut Lang is my absolute favorite. . . . God, Armani is so old-ladyish. . . . Lagerfeld ruined the house of Chanel; Coco would never have done miniskirts. I watched this documentary about her. She was so great. . . . I'm like a fashion-magazine junkie. I love them, but they're usually pretty late. By the time they print it, it's already happened. The British magazines are much further ahead in terms of what's happening in the street."

Chloe can speak with some confidence about what's happening in the street. Some say Chloe *is* what's happening in the street. In addition to her jellies Chloe is wearing a very short white dress made of a shiny, flame-friendly space-age synthetic. It looks sort of familiar (Gaultier? X-Girl?), although you won't see anyone else on the street wearing one, at least not yet, with eight weeks to go till Halloween. Maybe you saw it a few years back on the little girl from the next building who came around with her father and held her pillowcase open for the mini Snickers bars. It says "Cinderella" in floral-pink letters across the chest, above an image of a magic slipper and a cheerful pink-and-blue rendering of the fairy-tale princess inside her pumpkin carriage. All that's missing is the plastic mask. The funny thing is, it looks really good on Chloe. Several people have already asked about it today, and she's told them she scavenged this number in a Brooklyn thrift shop. Two dollars. She accessorizes it with a fake Chanel bracelet from Canal Street, which she wears around her biceps. At this moment, she is five feet eight, weighs a hundred and ten pounds, and looks, in her current short coif, quite a bit like a skinny Jean Seberg. Her nose is perhaps a bit blunt, and she points out the crookedness in her posture, which is the result of childhood scoliosis, but this doesn't prevent downtown style-chieftains and scenesters from comparing her to Twiggy and Audrey Hepburn and Edie Sedgwick.

After lunch, Chloe cruises over to Daryl K, a boutique on East Sixth Street. She checks the racks methodically and holds up a pair of white vinyl pants. "I used to want these really bad, but I don't now." She still feels guilty about the fact that she once spent a hundred and twenty dollars on another pair of pants here. It's the most she's ever spent on anything, clotheswise. Generally she shops at thrift stores; not at vintage shops, which are thrift stores with an attitude, and not even at Manhattan thrift stores—forget about Cheap Jack's and Andy's Chee-Pees, which she considers self-conscious and hopelessly picked over. Chloe favors places in Brooklyn and her native Connecticut. It's a rare day that she's wearing more than ten dollars' worth of clothes. Perhaps because she's nervous that her current shoes are about to be fruitful and multiply, she decides to walk down to Chinatown and get a pair of Chinese fishnet sandals for two dollars.

THE first time it happened, Chloe was seventeen. She was standing at a newsstand on Sixth Avenue, in the Village, when she was approached by Andrea Lee Linett, the fashion editor at *Sassy*. Linett was styling a commercial for the short-lived "Jane" show. "I saw Chloe," she says, "and I thought, Oh, we *have* to put her in the shot, but the producers said, 'No, she's really weird-looking.' " Linett stuck her in the commercial anyway and then asked her to do a shoot for the magazine. Chloe was photographed eating a carrot, wearing the big tan corduroy overalls that had caught Linett's eye. At the time, Chloe had hair down to her butt, and she used to tuck it up inside a big Nefertitian hat of her own creation. After the shoot, Linett went out and bought baggy tan corduroy overalls for herself.

Chloe was still a student at Darien High School then, sneaking off to the city whenever she could. She'd tell her parents that she hated them for raising her in Darien, that ur-suburb, though actually her parents were pretty cool: when Chloe shaved her head, her mother told her that she looked really cute, kind of French. And her father understood her attraction to the city; he'd lived on St. Mark's Place and hung out at Max's Kansas City before he moved to Darien for the sake of the very kids—Chloe and her older brother, Paul—who would later yell at him for it. Chloe's was not quite the conventional Darien upbringing, any more than she is the conventional rebellious suburban kid. She grew up in a gray shingled ranch house near Long Island Sound that looks pretty raffish amid the austere white Colonials and the tall, picket-fenced Victorians. "My father was in insurance until his company was sold, and then he started painting trompe-l'oeil. He started with our kitchen, and then he did it for other people. He's really good. We never had as much money as everyone else. I didn't really like the kids in Darien." So Chloe started coming to the city, where she found kindred spirits in the tribe of skateboarders based in Washington Square Park. "I used to tell my parents I was going to Greenwich or New Rochelle. Then I'd drive into the city. The summer of '92 was when I first met everyone. I came to the city with two girls from Connecticut who were my homegirls. We'd go to Washington Square Park and I'd meet people. Every skater in the city was there. I'd go every weekend and hang, and then stay at different skaters' homes."

It happened again a few months after the *Sassy* shoot, when Chloe was hanging out in the city, kicking it with her friend Harold and the other skateboarders. While she was sitting in a friend's car just off Washington Square, she noticed a woman walking past for maybe the third time, and then the woman stuck her head in the window and told Chloe she was a photographer and asked if she would like to be in *i-D*, a British fashion-and-music magazine that just happened to be one of Chloe's all-time favorite publications.

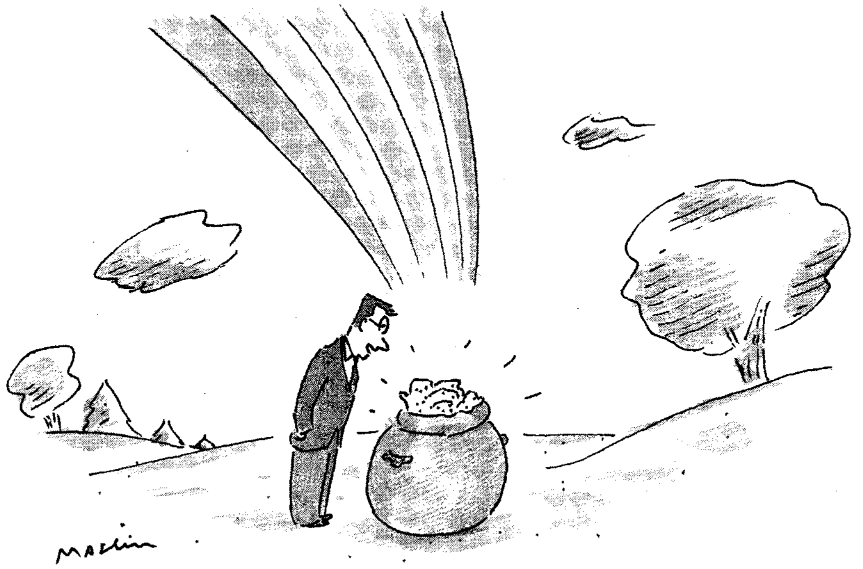
Meanwhile, the folks at *Sassy* asked Chloe to be an intern that summer. And then Sonic Youth—the godparents of alternative rock, and possibly the coolest band in the world—cast her in their new video. The idea for the video was to do a little parable about the way Seventh Avenue plagiarizes the guerrilla fashion of the street: the Trickle-Up Theory of Fashion, where the Up Haute cops the Down Low. The whole grunge thing was just peaking: runway models were slouching around in expensive *hommages* to the scruffy rockers of Seattle and their thrift-shop flannel shirts. And who better than Chloe to represent the super-cool street girl whose style gets ripped off in the designer showroom?

"I heard about Chloe through *Sassy*," says Daisy von Furth, twenty-five, who styled the video and, together with grungy heartthrob Kim Gordon, the bass player of Sonic Youth, designs X-Girl, a line of casual rock-and-roll-girl clothing. "When I met Chloe, I instantly knew that she was so super-cool, and it's been so cool to see where she's gone from there fashionwise. She was dressing in arch preppy stuff and wide-wale corduroys, and she always had the best look. It was never off-the-rack skate stuff. We were all into old Fila stuff from the mid-eighties, but it was like *her* Fila sweater would blow yours away. She looked like a village guy who steals from Polo." The Polo element of Chloe's wardrobe was in part a function of a job she'd taken at the mall in Stamford senior year. Chloe tried all the stores in the mall: "I had just shaved my head and I thought it was really funny that Polo was the only one that called me back." The safe, sporty uniform of prepsters and Westchester Saab drivers was at that moment being hijacked by rappers and skaters in a sort of inversion of the Trickle-Up Theory. "All the hip-hop kids were sporting Polo then," Chloe explains. "They called it 'Lo. But now it's not hip. Everyone wears it now." Everyone but Chloe.

"She's ahead of the other girls," von Furth says, "because she's read all the history of fashion and she can go into a thrift shop and find the old Yves Saint Laurent dress, when all the other girls are going, 'Hey, wow, look at this wacky T-shirt.' If you can get it on Prince Street or Broadway, it's already over for Chloe."

Chloe was one of the models for the New York launch of the X-Girl line, which took place on Wooster Street last April—a major gathering of the interconnected tribes of hip-hop, rave, indie rock, and skateboarding. Chloe was also one of the muses. "We took one shirt she had," von Furth says, "and we knocked it off. It was this blue broadcloth shirt and it just fit her so well. When we were doing our fall stuff, I had her try on stuff. Sometimes I think, This is really *Chloe-ish*."

Around that time, Chloe posed for a fashion spread in *Paper*, the *Vogue* of the down-low universe, and she did the Lemonheads video for "Big Gay Heart." The Lemonheads are considered either very cool or really bogus—lead singer Evan Dando has managed to inspire an anti-fanzine called *Die Evan Dando, Die*, presumably because he is too cute and his songs are too catchy. But Chloe simply *likes* the Lemonheads. "One of the great things about Chloe is that she's incredibly enthusiastic," von Furth says. "A lot of



YVES SAINT LAURENT FINDS A POT OF GOLD LAMÉ AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW.

• •

other girls in her position as super-cool girl would be really mean and jaded, but she's not jaded at all." Andrea Lee Linett agrees. "She's not too cool for school, and she doesn't have an attitude. She's like a pure Edie Sedgwick, minus the drugs and craziness. She still *likes* her parents."

Chloe's girlish enthusiasm can break out at almost any time, as when she hears from a friend that a film based on her favorite book, Jim Carroll's "Basketball Diaries," is being shot in the East Village. She just has to wander by the set, and, my God, there he is, the slouchy poet laureate of the downtown lowlife himself, Jim Carroll, and she can't help approaching him and telling him, "You can't let them do this." Chloe is concerned that the film will violate the spirit of the book, not just because she has heard a rumor that they might be changing the heroin to crack and because Marky Mark (Chloe rolls her eyes) is in it, but finally because it's, well, *Hollywood.* Yet, for all her purist concern, what comes through when she recounts this story is her delight at meeting an idol: "I was so excited. It was one of the highlights of my life."

Certainly anyone who has heard Chloe's laugh—which alternately suggests a mallard surprised into flight and a drowning victim gasping for air—would be hard-pressed to call her jaded. But it's probably her spacey air of mystery and reserve as well as the street chic that keep causing people to ask, "Who *is* that girl?"

"She's definitely the girl of the moment," says Walter Cessna, a writer for *Paper*. "All the kids think she's the shit, all the store owners think she's the shit. What's interesting about Chloe is she spans both scenes, the whole grunge thing and the whole rave thing. Chloe really is the symbol for all those kids. But she does keep to herself." Cessna wrote a screenplay, "Children of the Rave," loosely based on Chloe and other kids from the scene. He also *tried* to represent her for modelling assignments, but found her curiously indifferent to being marketed. "I came up with serious stuff, like Steven Meisel for Italian *Vogue*, and she never showed up. It was kind of a fuck-you thing. At the time I was pissed, but now I kind of admire it. But finally I couldn't deal with the fifteen phone numbers and everything."

Chloe cheerfully admits to blowing off Meisel, one of the most important fashion photographers alive. (This seeming indifference to marketing herself may be her most attractive quality. It may also be canny.) To call Chloe elusive is an understatement: contacting her is a matter of triangulation—calling friends, calling her parents, calling Liquid Sky, the boutique on Lafayette Street where she has been working for the past year. When an appointment is made, it's not always kept, particularly if it's before afternoon. And when you find Chloe—when she's right there, sitting across the table from you at Jerry's or Odessa, in a tight black sweater she bought in Darien for three dollars embroidered with French expressions like "Affaire de Coeur" and "Cherchez la Femme"—you may find yourself *still* looking for her, looking for something more. It's a neat trick to be able to suggest hidden reserves—to be a tabula rasa and seem to be the Dead Sea Scrolls—and Chloe's friends all eventually allude to this sense that she is holding back. "She just sits there," says her friend Rita Ackermann, a Budapest-born artist, "but she controls the whole scene. That's her charisma."

HERE in the blue-tiled bathroom of Tunnel, a night club that has survived the eighties to enjoy a second round of popularity, it looks like a rave is going on: dozens of street kids in their mid- to late teens dancing to house music, smoking whatever, and kicking it. They're waiting for Chloe. The girls are slim and boyish; the boys are all trying for goatees, but most of them aren't quite up to it yet. In their baggy pants and T-shirts, they hardly appear costume-designed. The dirty fingernails are real, and more than a few of the kids are brilliantly reproducing that fucked-up party look (dilated pupils and silly grins), although it's only two in the afternoon and this is actually the set of "Kids," a modest-budget feature directed by the photographer Larry Clark, who is best known for his book "Tulsa." Clark spent time in Washington Square Park photographing the skateboarders and later persuaded one of them, Harmony Korine, to write a screenplay about the scene. Clark then secured the invaluable backing of Gus Van Sant.

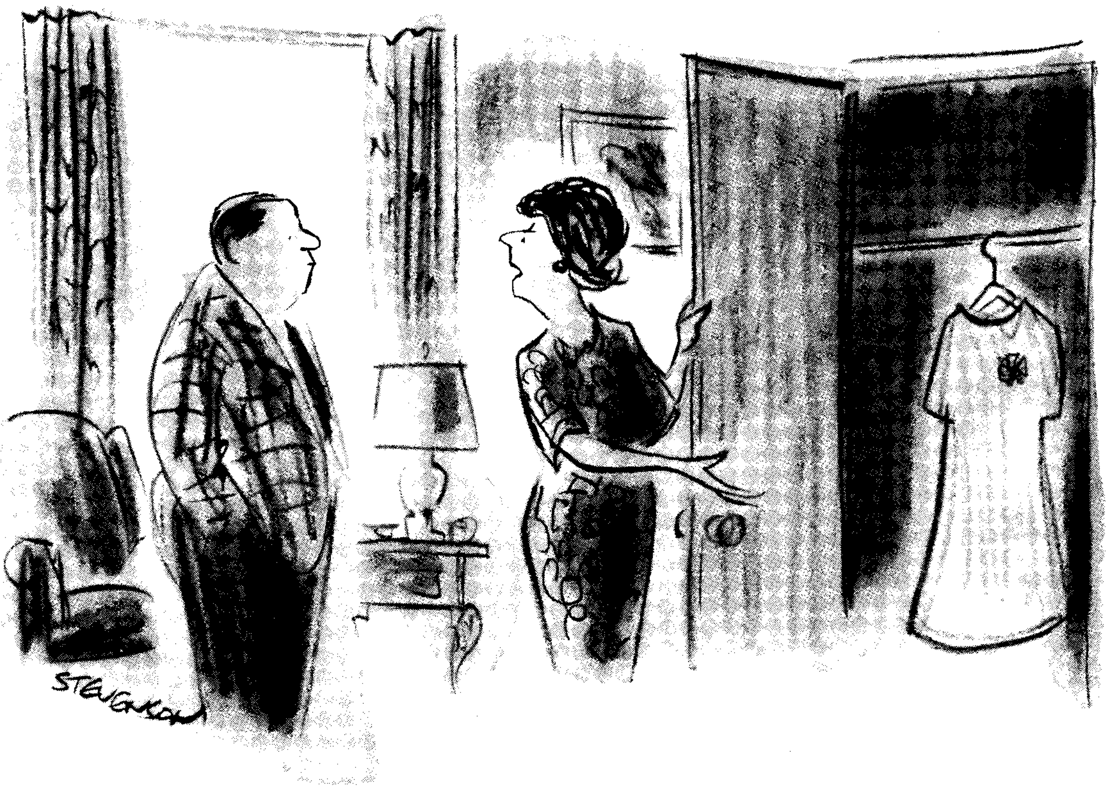
Harmony is one of the kids standing around the giant bathroom of Tunnel, and he's wearing two-inch-thick prismatic glasses that make it impossible, presumably, to see much. He looks like a fifteen-year-old mad scientist; his expression is the perennial smirk of the kid who's just waiting for the stink bomb to go off. He admits that he may have had Chloe in mind when he wrote the lead female role. "She's kind of passive, like Chloe," he concedes. Harmony couldn't stand the first actress cast, an actual professional, who apparently *looked* like an actress amid all the street kids. "I hated her!" Harmony shouts. "I wanted to punch her. So Larry said, 'Do you have anybody else in mind?' and I said, 'Why not Chloe?' " The actress was fired, Chloe was hired, and now everybody's waiting to shoot one of the final scenes, where Chloe's character comes to the rave to look for the guy who stole her virginity.

Jim Nugent, the Teamster captain on the production, who has just finished working on the new Walter Matthau movie, thinks things on this set are getting a little too real. "These kids, the extras—they're, like, right off the streets. One of them tried to pick a fight with me the other day. I said to him, 'Are you fucking crazy? I'm a Teamster.' He didn't care." Nugent likes Chloe; he worries about her and about the company she's keeping. "So the first day of shooting I'm supposed to pick up Chloe, she's like the star of the movie and she gets a driver. So I say, 'Chloe, where do you want to be picked up tomorrow?' and she says, 'I don't know,' and I say, 'What do you mean, you don't know?' and she says, 'I don't really live anywhere,' and I say, 'What? You're homeless? What am I, s'posed to pick you up at cardboard box No. 7?' " Finally, they decided to give Chloe a beeper, so they could find her each morning wherever she had crashed.

THE next night—well, technically, Saturday morning—Chloe is back in the coed bathroom of Tunnel, this time as a civilian. She's wearing a very short surgical-cloth shift with a laser-printed design by her friend Rita Ackermann on the front: two sloe-eyed "opium-den girls" with violently smeared lipstick.

Forget about the so-called V.I.P. lounge; the bathroom is the best scene in the club. It looks almost like the eighties in here, only more extreme—drag queens, drug deals, pierced lips, world-class posing. The crowd is homogeneous in its inchoate youthfulness (no aging pop artists, socialites, or countesses in sight) and heterogeneous in its drug use: a few grinning lovebugs on ecstasy; glassy-eyed junksters; furtive, Speedy Gonzales cokeheads zipping in and out of the stalls. Yes, it's back; it never went away. Here's a pre-voting-age enthusiast wearing a T-shirt that says "Snort Coke, Snort More Coke." Quaaludes are back, too. And Ritalin, the drug often prescribed for hyperactive children, is a relatively new buzz on the scene. Then there are the truly fucked-up—the candy flippers, the most catholic of druggies, who mix their pharmaceuticals like the ingredients of a tropical cocktail. They come out of the stalls pie-eyed after a couple of lines of Special K, a snortable combination of horse tranquillizers, heroin, and coke.

Chloe is greeted and hugged by William, one of the club kids, a hulking, tatterdemalion figure wearing layers of shirts and ragged sweaters, with pink hair shaved close to his skull, and rings and plugs in his lips. And there's Sophia, looking very 1967 in a white leather mini, with her long, straight dyed hair. Someone—not Chloe—comments that Sophia looks good considering that she is, like, really old, like forty or thirty-four or something. Here also is the famous and much loved Junkie Jonathan, his eyes ringed with kohl, tottering on high platforms. He's wearing some kind of crocheted shirt, which is accessorized with a slave collar and a black lunchbox. Chloe says, "Actually, he's not looking so hot tonight. Usually he has



"Voilà! My fall collection!"

a kind of deconstructionist punk look."

The club kids are professional party creatures, who dress and coif themselves to fabulous extremes and are paid by the management of the clubs to hang out—thereby, presumably, attracting the less fashion-forward wannabes and weekend scenesters. The kids form one of the downtown tribes among which Chloe moves, like a roving ambassador without portfolio.

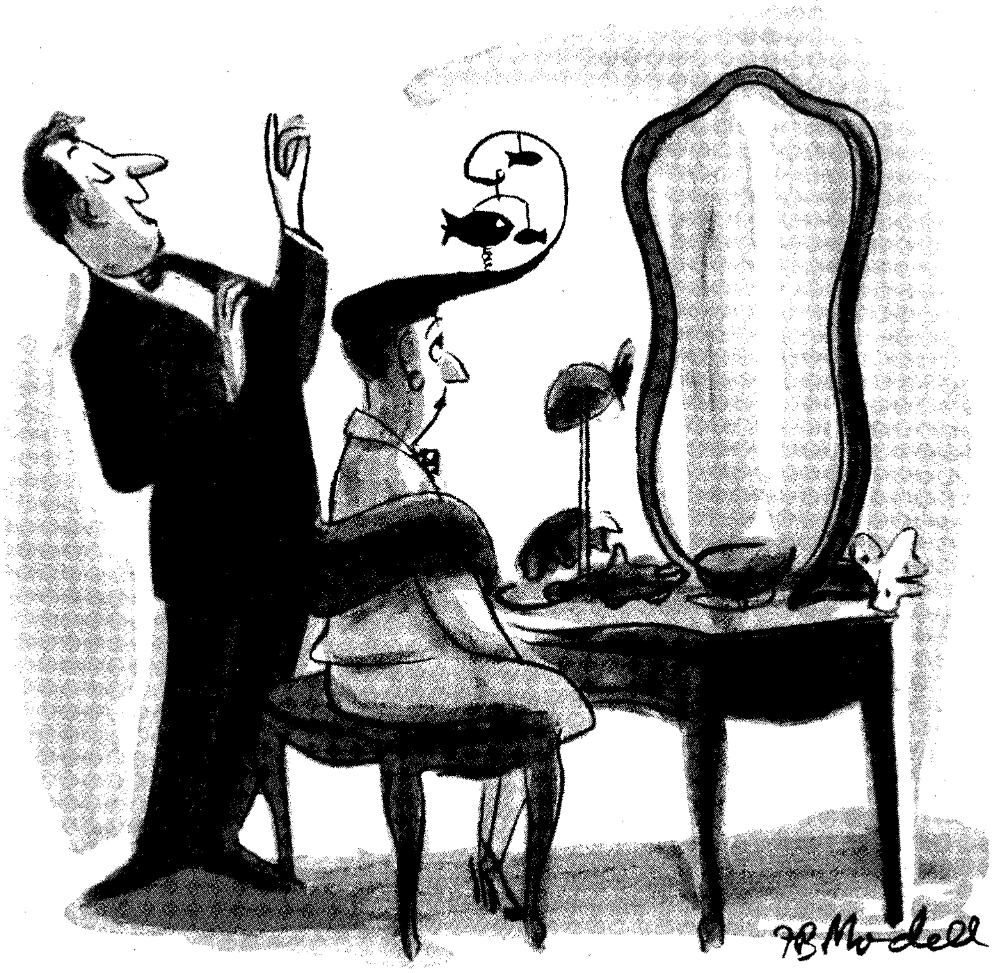
"Some of the club kids have great fashion sense and they influence high fashion," Chloe says. "Last spring, Anna Sui and Donna Karan were definitely influenced by the rave scene. All that athletic wear and techno wear, all the stripes. Anna Sui rips everything off."

Chloe scans the room. "It's kind of tacky tonight," she says, observing dozens of young men who are wrapped in sheets. The word has apparently gone out on some deep-buried wire that tonight is toga night. Here, at what should be the cutting edge of street fashion, the late arrivals look like a bunch of beer-bashing Phi Delts. And over there is Methuselan mogul Steven Greenberg, the Benjamin Franklin look-alike who has haunted the hot spots since at least the Pleistocene, wearing four young women with his well-cut navy business suit. "Oh God, him," Chloe says. "That's the guy who gives my friend Carissa money all the time. He's like her sugar daddy, but she says she doesn't have to do anything." Chloe's idea of an attractive older man is Evan Dando, who is twenty-seven. Her current boyfriend is an eighteen-year-old named Robby Cronholm, who plays in a band called Crumb. She takes out his picture and displays it. "Isn't he cute?" He looks like a very attractive twelve-year-old with long hair and a big goofy grin. Unfortunately, Robby lives in San Francisco. The thought turns Chloe melancholy.

AT 3 A.M., Chloe is checking out the merchandise spread along the sidewalk on Second Avenue between St. Mark's Place and Seventh Street. Last week, she bought a great silver-plated picture frame for fifty cents, but she doesn't find any treasures tonight. She steps over a pile of women's shoes into the narrow doorway of the apartment building where she's been staying for the past month—in a second-floor walkup she and her friend Lila Lee are subletting from the "Kids" costume designer. It's a small studio with uneven brick walls. The tub is in the middle of the floor; toilet's down the hall. Chloe surprised a junkie there last week. The refrigerator harbors a pitcher of cold tap water and not much else.

Lila returns at about three-fifteen. She's just had her butt-length dreads waxed, and she keeps feeling them. Lila is one of several people who are said to be Chloe's best friend. She is from a first-generation Korean family who live near Nyack. Like Chloe, she hates the suburbs. "I started coming down to the city when I was thirteen," she says. "I got into some really weird situations, staying with squatters. I can't believe I didn't get in more trouble than I did. My first kiss was in this squat; I kissed two different guys on the same night."

Chloe puts on Pavement's "Slanted and Enchanted" album. Pavement is currently one of her favorite bands, along with Sebadoh and Courtney Love's Hole. "My first place in the city, I lived on Fourth and Avenue C with this friend and her boyfriend," Chloe says. "She was a junkie. It was a spot, and the dealers would watch out for us and take care of us, but eventually one of the dealers ripped my friend off. When we went out, we'd go to Limelight and USA and raves. After Avenue C, I lived in Brooklyn Heights with another junkie friend, who was also a dominatrix. She was eighteen. It was a real hell house. Everybody was doing a lot of drugs. When River Phoenix died, we had this tribute party. We rented four movies and did dope. It was pretty sick." Dope is heroin. Chloe says she doesn't do dope—she's too paranoid—and it finally became awkward for her to hang around with junkies. "It got too weird. The police would come to the door about credit-card frauds. I had to get out of there.



"It came to me in a dream one night."

Then I went from house to house, living with different friends. Then I moved into another house in Brooklyn Heights, with four friends, until June."

When Chloe left the Brooklyn Heights flop, she and Lila drifted from place to place together. "We stayed with friends," Lila says, "and if we couldn't find a place to stay we'd just go to a rave. Every Friday night, there was a NASA rave at the Shelter." (NASA refers not to the space agency but to Nocturnal Audio Sensory Awakening, an unofficial organization devoted to another kind of space travel.) "It was open till 8 A.M. It was the *after* party. People would be at Limelight, and then they'd go to the Shelter."

During the day, Chloe and Lila would hang out outside, with the skateboarders. Skateboarding is not quite equal-opportunity employment. The girls mostly watch. "You'd just sit there for hours waiting for people and watching people skate," Lila says. "Skating is a little life style. They stick together. Skaters aren't really into drugs. Just weed and booze. They shun hard drugs."

"In the summer of '93, the ravers came in and took over Washington Square Park," Chloe recalls. "If you were a geek in high school, you could be a raver. Anyone could go to a rave. At a hip-hop club, everyone's putting on a front. Everyone's tough. At a rave, everyone is high and mellow. But then heroin came along and made it much darker and more depressing. There was this big ecstasy dealer everybody knew on the scene. He died of a heroin overdose, and it really fucked everyone up. But they still do it."

From the stereo, Pavement sings, "Can you treat it like an oil well, when it's underground, out of sight?" Lila says, "The scene in the park got too commercial. Kids from New Jersey would come in, and the skaters had to find more down-low spots."

"Down low" is a cherished concept: secret, alternative, not commercial—everything one wants to be. Except one also sort of wants to be famous, and here is the contradiction at the heart of Chloe's world, the dilemma of subcultures that ostensibly define themselves in opposition to the prevailing commercial order, the dilemma of all the boys and girls who want to be in *Paper* and *Details:* What do you do if *Harper's Bazaar*, or Calvin Klein, comes calling? In Chloe's case, so far, you sort of blow them off.

Chloe lights a cigarette and pours a glass of water. Lila gets up to change the CD to A Tribe Called Quest. She tells Chloe she's rented "River's Edge."

"I hate Keanu," Chloe says. But, since it's there, they play it, watching until dawn.

WHEN "Kids" wraps a few days later, Chloe isn't sure what she'll do next. First she's got to move her stuff back up to her parents' house, in Darien, simply because there isn't anyplace else to put it. She might go to London for a few weeks—she's never been. And then she's going to get her portfolio of drawings together and apply to college. She's thinking about some kind of fashion or design degree. Someday, somebody should erect a statue to Chloe in Tompkins Square Park, with the amazing legend, "She didn't want to be an actress or a model"—although she is going to do the Martin Margiella show at Charivari, since she likes Margiella clothes. What she thinks she'd really like to be is a costume designer for period films. For the time being, she has decided to go back and work at Liquid Sky, which is more of a home to Chloe than any of the apartments she'll be crashing in.

Liquid Sky is the creation of Mary Frey, a waifish bleached blonde from New Orleans, who actually looks more like Edie Sedgwick than Chloe or anyone else does; Carlos Slinger, a.k.a. DJ Soul-Slinger, a Brazilian disk jockey and rave evangelist, whose air of mystery is enhanced by his wraparound dark goggles; and Claudia Rey, a London-based artist and designer. The store presents a narrow, liquid face to Lafayette Street: a sheet of real water shimmers down the front of the window. Inside, a clubby, trippy ambience prevails. Over the cash register is a giant papier-mâché head of Astrogirl, who is the house mascot. A cooler in the corner is stocked with smart drinks, including Gusto Love Bomb: "It's the surreal thing." A staircase at the back leads down to Temple Records, billed as "100% underground. Import dance techno. We have the top acid, trance, breakbeat, ambient, house and jungle. The American music industry (radio) does not want you to hear this music."

Mary Frey ricochets from one end of the store to the other, wearing a blue Astrogirl T-shirt, bluejeans, and a nose ring. "Liquid Sky is a posse, a concept," Frey says. "It's a whole vibration. It's music, it's d.j.s, it's fashion. It supports the whole future of adolescence. This is New York Rave Central. We're the connection to all the raves on the East Coast." Frey sees the rave scene as a reaction to the élitist night-club scene of the eighties. "Everybody was sick of the corporate clubs. They were doing that

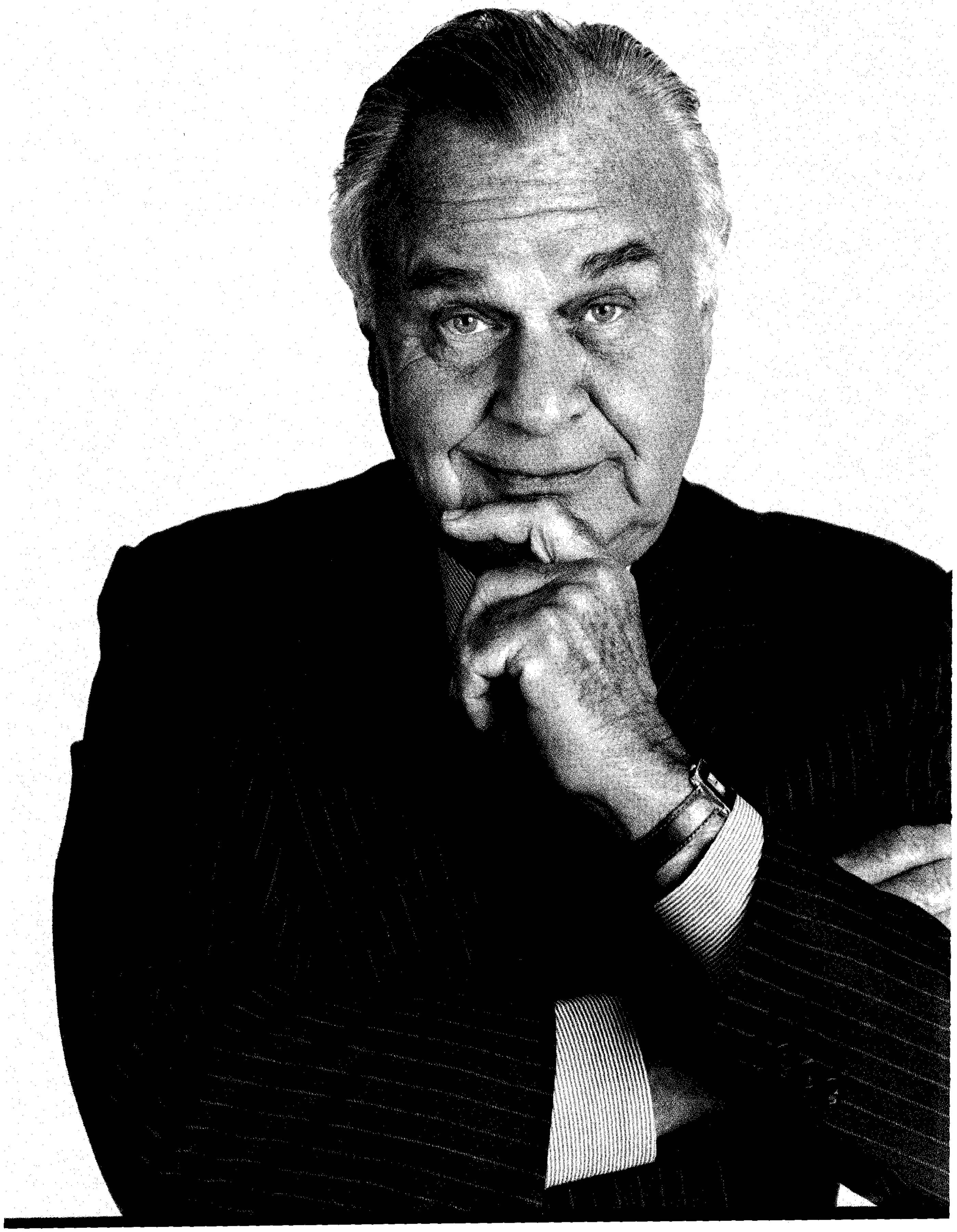
WHAT SHE SAID AFTERWARD

Used to be I could lie like crazy—lie
to you, to "save my life," lie
to be "pretty"—and not know it.

Leaves underneath were green
with light in moments of—
call it horror. A dahlia might
spread creased magenta petals—
intricate, showy—when the time came

to be lonely. Used to be
I could hold off—wait—wait
to tell the truth. Now there isn't any.

—ELIZABETH MACKLIN



PORTFOLIO BY RICHARD AVEDON: FOUR DESIGNERS *Bill Blass, New York City, October 13, 1994.*

Calvin Klein, New York City, October 13, 1994.

Oscar de la Renta, New York City, October 13, 1994.

Isaac Mizrahi, New York City, October 13, 1994.

picking-and-choosing thing, that exclusionary thing. The raves are more democratic."

Frey first noticed Chloe at one of the boutique's parties and was taken with her unearthly poise. She said to Gabriel Hunter, an Aspen transplant who was hanging out with Chloe, "Who's that girl? She seems so together."

When Frey, Slinger, and Rey opened the store on Lafayette Street, they asked Gabriel and Chloe to join them. Gabe and Chloe became in-house muses, models, and gofers. Chloe also became a seamstress. "I needed somebody to sew," Frey says, "and Chloe said, No problem. She would gladly do anything that needed doing around the shop." At twenty-six, Frey considers herself somewhat ancient, and feels lucky to have the inspiration of youth. Speaking of Chloe and Gabe's generation, she says, "They don't want to hang out with older people and go to the Hamptons. It's a completely underground scene. A lot of fashion people come down and they rip it off. But that's O.K."

Today, Frey has to run down to Chinatown to grab an outfit for a wedding in London. This guy who's in Depeche Mode is getting married, and she's flying tonight, and all her clothes are dirty. She keeps talking on the way out the door: "Chloe's her own category. She's not a raver. She's not a rocker. She's like the old muses of Chanel or Christian Dior. Now you have this commercialized beauty, you have these cheesy-assed models like the ones who live in that building." Frey pauses and points into the ornate lobby of the Police Building, the super-expensive downtown coöp. "It's not about what designer you're wearing anymore," she says to the building.

CHLOE'S old room in Darien is waiting for her. Its bookshelves are filled with back issues of *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *The Face*. There's a lava lamp on the bookshelf and a framed poster for a Sonic Youth and Breeders concert hanging over the desk. Chloe shows Lila a spread in the November, 1992, *Sassy*, with the head: "Our intern Chloe has more style in her little finger . . ."

Chloe is going to drive Lila back to her parents' house tonight. First, though, they head for a thrift shop in downtown Darien. Chloe works the racks the same way she works the pages of a fashion magazine—thoroughly, meticulously. She goes up and down the rows, missing nothing. Eventually, she comes up with a cream-colored Christian Dior shirt with a long collar, probably from the seventies, and a thin aqua belt. She almost buys a man's brown felt fedora but decides it's a bit too big. The total for the shirt and the belt is five dollars.

Then Chloe is spotted by two girls she knew in high school. It is hard to imagine these chubby-cheeked girls, with their white baseball caps and Top-Siders, in the same school lunchroom as Chloe. Her claim that she was an outsider at her high school begins to seem like an understatement. Whatever these girls may have thought about Chloe Sevigny in junior year, they are clearly thrilled to see her now.

"Oh, hi, Chloe, how are you? I heard you were in a movie."

"Yeah. Wow. That is just so great."

Chloe tries to shrink away behind the clothes rack. "Well, it's only an independent movie," she demurs. "It probably won't even get shown here."

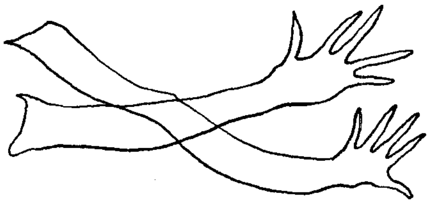
"Wow, that is so cool."

"That's awesome," the other girl agrees.

Later, back in the car, Chloe says to Lila, "God! That one girl was the sister of this friend of mine. Once she threw this book from the top of the stairs, and it gashed my forehead."

Lila shudders in empathy. In just a few days, she starts her junior year.

IN front of Charivari on West Fifty-seventh Street a few days later, a dense crowd blocks the sidewalk, forcing rush-hour pedestrians out into the street. It's a downtown congregation gathered uptown, including Lila, who's visiting from Rockland County, and Harmony, who is shivering in a white T-shirt, along with a slightly skeptical posse of black-clad assistants and editors from *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. The veteran celebrity photographer Bill Cunningham scans the crowd and doesn't recognize many of the faces. Everyone is waiting for the preview of Martin Margiella's new fall line to begin. Margiella, of course, is the Belgian designer who practically invented deconstruction—or, at least, the fashion world's version of it—a couple of years ago: all those unfinished seams and inside-out designs that reveal the *construction* of the garment.



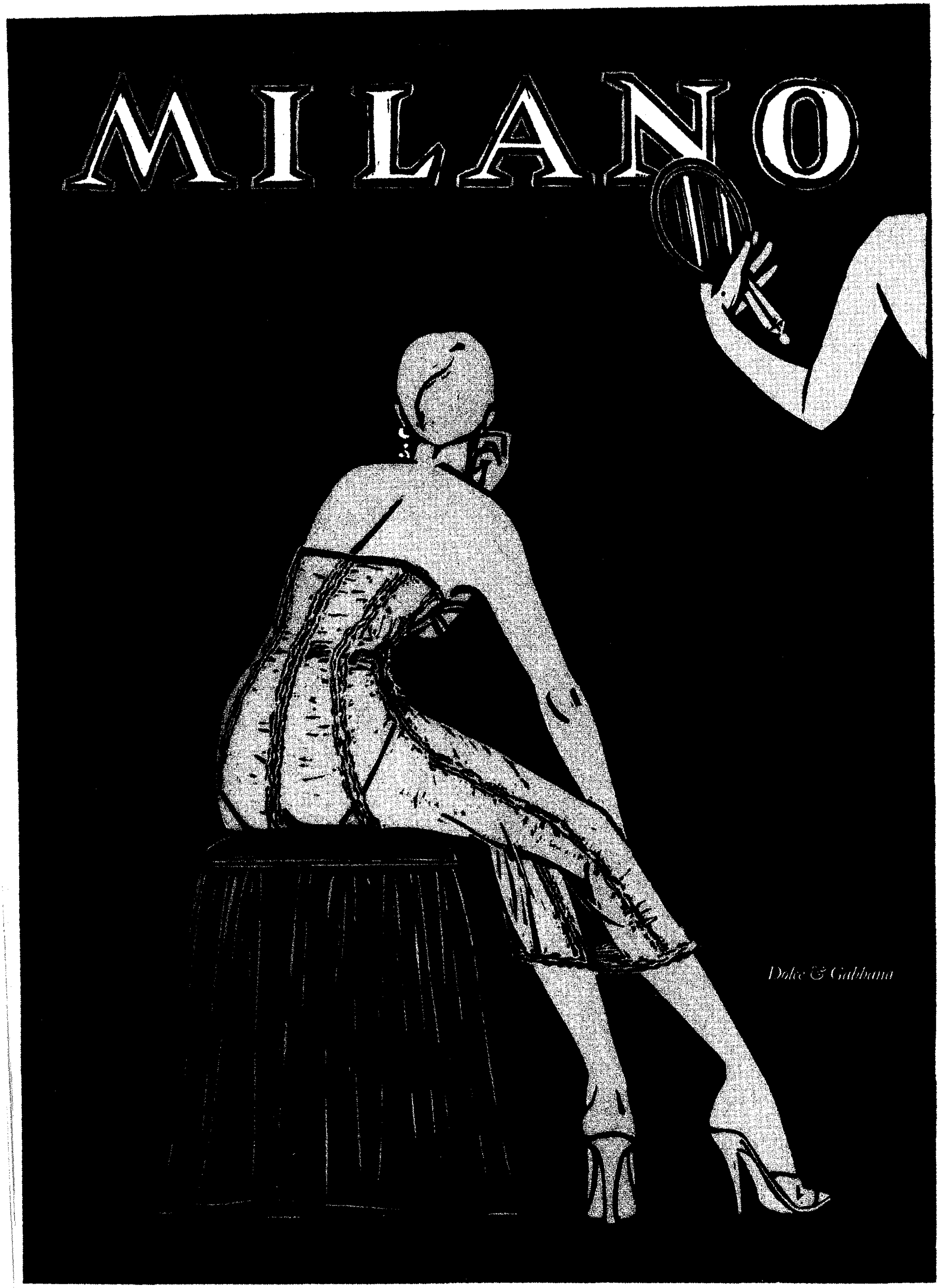
The door to Charivari is blocked by a guard; the windows are covered over with brown paper. "I like to watch Chloe model," Harmony says. "Usually, she stumbles." But there's nothing so conventional as a runway here. Chloe doesn't have to walk. The sound of bongos signals the start of the presentation. The paper over the windows is ripped away to reveal ten models slouching on the other side of the glass. All are wearing Mylar strips, which obscure their eyes. Chloe's the third from the left. Only the spectators in front see much more than the heads. Eventually, everyone funnels into the store.

Inside, Chloe talks to Gabriel Feliciano, who is a fledgling stylist and part-time hostess at Lucky Cheng's, the Chinese drag restaurant in the East Village. Gabriel's wearing a shiny lime-green shirt that looks very seventies. Chloe is in Margiella's tailored two-piece brown suit, which is based on a design from the forties. Suddenly, silver-haired Polly Mellen, the legendary longtime fashion editor of *Vogue*, who is now at *Allure*, comes over to examine the outfit through her owlish glasses, casually adjusting the jacket and skirt on Chloe as Chloe stands, slightly awkward, unused to the intimate anonymity of being a professional mannequin. Chloe's normally enigmatic expression clearly says, *Let me outta here.*

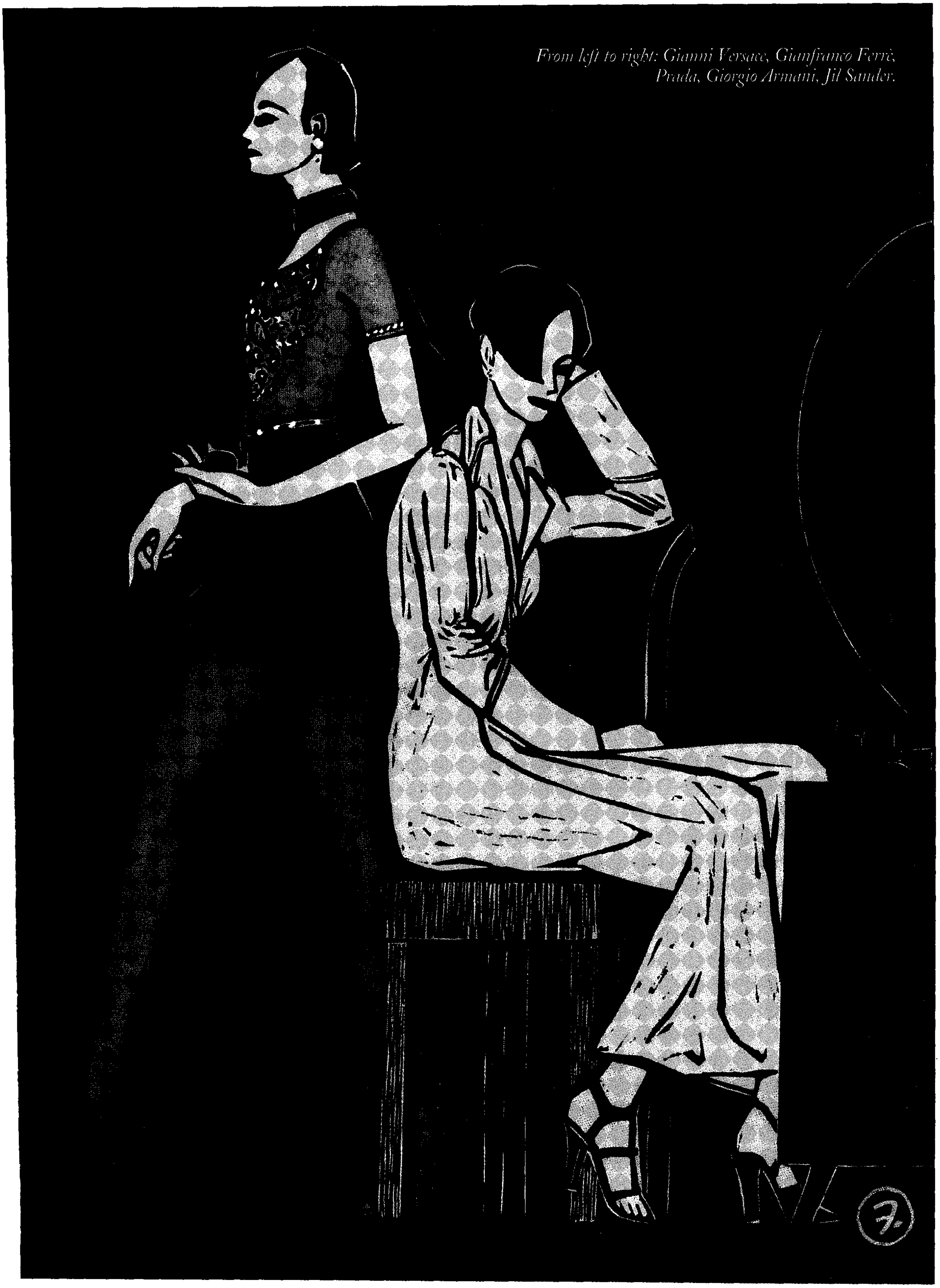
The meeting of one of the priestesses of high fashion and the downtown girl of the moment passes uneventfully. In a couple of hours, Chloe will be back downtown, in her world.

Clutching a wineglass and watching his friend, Feliciano says, "People want to project their desire on one girl. She's smart enough to hold back, and that allows us all to project whatever we want to. I could go on and on about Chloe, but actually I know very little about her." ♦

SPRING 1995 MILAN COLLECTIONS • BY FRANÇOIS BERTHOUD



Dolce & Gabbana



From left to right: Gianni Versace, Gianfranco Ferrè, Prada, Giorgio Armani, Jil Sander.

ITALIAN DATEBOOK

LUNCH WITH MR. ARMANI, TEA WITH MR. VERSACE, DINNER WITH MR. VALENTINO

BY STEPHEN SCHIFF

BREAKFAST, MILAN: There is no breakfast in Milan—or none to speak of, anyway. The day starts early, and before the sun is well up, the inhabitants of Italy's second-largest city are already bustling about, showing the world they mean business. The sightseeing here stinks, the Milanese will proudly tell you. The weather is awful, always gray and verging on drizzle. The buildings are boring except for the beautiful courtyards—and almost no one gets to see those. Milan isn't for tourists and dreamers. This is Italy's economic pump. The town's center is devoted to just two things: at one end of Via Manzoni, banking; at the other, fashion.

At breakfast time, in the curvy streets near the massive pink-white cathedral, the Milanese stand at silver bars in the Caffè Montenapo, the Cova, the Sant'Ambroeus, gulping down espresso and a bit of pastry, perhaps indulging in a glass of bright-purple juice made from blood oranges. The meal, if that is the right word for it, lasts no more than fifteen minutes, and sometimes as little as two or three. Then it's out onto the streets—especially the ancient streets around Via Montenapoleone and Via della Spiga, where the clothing shops and the fashion houses are. The Milanese are nervy and purposeful and sleek. They stalk the narrow sidewalks purring into cellular phones, and they look terrific. This is an openly erotic society, where one's walk is devoted as much to allure as to transport, where plain people look beautiful and beautiful people look devastating, and those who do not look beautiful or devastating dress and move as though they did. In front of the Gianni Versace store, on Via Montenapoleone, two Mercedes limousines pull up, disgorging numerous servants and chauffeurs and then a coterie of young Middle Eastern beauties, presided over by a tall, glamorous princess in a chic black suit. As they swoop into Versace, the rest of Montenapoleone scarcely stirs. The street is full of Milanese appraising the shopwindows with the ray-gun gaze of the fashion professional, whizzing in and out of showrooms devoted to designers you've never heard of: Ballabio, Gianni Accardi, Ursula Conzen, Giorgio Grati.

I am here, in the weeks before the spring collections, to accomplish something absurd. Breakfast is my own affair, as it is the Italians', but then I am to have a bite with the three monarchs of Italian design: lunch with Giorgio Armani, tea with Gianni Versace, and dinner with Valentino. As a fashion novice, I have two questions: What will we talk about? And what in God's name will I wear?

LUNCH, MILAN: The first thing to know about successful Italian fashion designers is that they don't eat in restaurants. They eat at home. The second thing to know is that they have many, many homes, and some of those homes are palaces. Giorgio Armani has three vacation houses, a house for his mother, and a palace on Via Borgonuovo, the toniest street in Milan. The Palazzo Rovero is not only his official residence but also his company's headquarters, and that is where I find myself in the middle of the morning, in a small black theatre with a runway in the center of it.

The runway is made of white glass, and along its edges are necklaces, shoes, boxes of earrings, and, at the far end, scarves. Hats, belts, bags, and stockings have been draped over the beige chairs where the audience usually sits. Standing on the runway in various stages of undress are three of the tallest, most beautiful young women I have ever seen. And sitting in front of them, cross-legged, is a tanned, compactly built man with white hair, glacial blue eyes, and a tiny nose that looks as though it had just been released from a clothespin. Giorgio Armani is wearing a white T-shirt by Giorgio Armani, blue Dockers-style pants by Giorgio Armani, and gold-framed eyeglasses by Giorgio Armani. To employ one of the industry's terms of art, it's a great look.

Now he leaps up, paces the stage, whirls, scrutinizes necklaces and scarves, whirls again to examine the model, and collapses into a swivel chair: the Gene Kelly of the atelier. Since nine this morning, he has been preparing for the presentation of his spring and summer women's ready-to-wear collection; he will continue into the evening, and, as the presentation nears, even until three or four in the morning. "Beautiful, no?" he keeps saying. "*Bella!* Very feminine." A short-haired model emerges from behind a screen wearing a high-waisted, diaphanous outfit, with a pleated skirt, and a sheer scarf draped around her neck and shoulders. Underneath, you can see breasts, nipples, panties. "A little too racy," Armani tuts. He approaches her, smiling paternally, makes as though to cup her breasts with his hands, and then backs off. He selects a brown, solid-looking bra from the line of accessories along the runway and hands it to her, and the model turns away, fiddles deftly with herself, and turns back to face him. Her bra is now firmly in place, along with a new slip to hide the panties. I spend much of the morning trying to be mature about this sort of thing.

At sixty, Armani is the most successful designer for men in the world, and one of the most celebrated designers of women's clothes as well: in the eighties, his "power suits" became as much the emblem of the working woman on the rise as Yves Saint Laurent's svelte jackets had been a decade before. Last year, his company's sales amounted to seven hundred and twenty million dollars; his products are sold in some two thousand stores. This is an empire built on the notion of tastefulness—nothing loud, nothing colorful, nothing overtly erotic. The Armani look aspires to a kind of transcendent neutrality: men's clothes are soft and flowy, hence feminized; women's clothes are sturdily tailored and subdued, hence masculinized; the body is idealized and made mystifying at the same time; the sumptuous fabrics droop and loll about it like a vapor. If Valentino is a classicist, building on a grand tradition, and Versace is a postmodernist, quoting and recombining motifs from the past, then Armani is fashion's preëminent modernist: his work is clean and functional, leery of mere decoration. People who wear it say that it makes them feel "secure."

I am feeling almost secure in an Armani suit, on top of a black cotton shirt from somewhere not terribly reputable, and I am sitting with Armani in his stark living room as he tells me about his next proposed conquest. He wants to get into housewares—towels, pillows, sheets, dishes, rugs. His own house is relentlessly beige, with blond wood everywhere, Chinese carpets, unemphatic couches and club chairs, black wooden floors. "If I should go into housewares, I will try to do a house that agrees with my clothes," Armani says, in Italian. (I have a translator at my side.) "It will be very simple. There will be a harmony between the woman sitting on a couch and the dress she wears. If a woman chooses a simple, refined, modern dress, her house can't be a 1910 house. It has to be modern. But for now this is something I have to keep on the shelf."

"Because you're too busy working on the business you already have?" I ask.

Armani nods, rolls his eyes, and explains how things have changed since the death, in 1985, of Sergio Galeotti, who had lived with him near the end of his life and had run—indeed, had virtually invented—Armani's company. "Now I supervise everything," Armani says. "I take care of the business, the lawyers. All the decisions are mine. I'm extremely busy right now because in the last ten years the company has earned a lot—too much." He shakes his head in mock amazement. "It's almost abnormal how much it has grown," he says. "That has been very stressful."

Later, of course, I will wonder if the stress has something to do with the legal troubles that burst into the open the week after my visit. On September 24th, Armani admitted to investigators that he had paid some sixty-five thousand dollars in bribes to tax auditors in 1990—one of two bribes he has acknowledged. On the same day, the Milanese designer Gianfranco Ferrè underwent similar questioning; a few days earlier, Gianni Versace's brother, Santo, who is the president of Versace, had been examined as well. Armani's lawyer, Oreste Dominioni, portrayed his client's indiscretion as the cost of doing business during the years of Tangentopoli, when extortion was a way of life in Italy. In any case, the bribery probe has not been Armani's only travail. Worse, and more shocking to those in the fashion industry, was the departure last May of Armani's longtime right hand, Gabriella Forte, who left to become the president of Calvin Klein.

Armani is circumspect in talking about Forte's defection—he watches me cagily as he speaks, his eyes opaque. "The way she left surprised me," he admits. "She's a very emotional person. So it's not as if she had never talked to me or hinted to me that she might leave. Every fight we had, she threatened to leave. That was normal. I was very hard on Gabriella, but she didn't take it negatively. She took it as an incentive. But she's not an easy person. She doesn't compromise." He pauses for a moment, plainly eager to say more, and equally certain that he shouldn't. "In my opinion, she's not a terribly happy person," he says. "But I want to stop there. Let's eat."

Lunch is served at a long oak table in an austere dining room—beige, of course—with parchment-covered walls. A small, fiftyish woman in a white apron bustles about with platters full of pasta primavera. Armani has changed into a long-sleeved black T-shirt, and now I ask him if Armani is all he wears.

"Yes, just Armani," he says, and then catches himself up. "No, that's not true. I have a few pairs of American shoes, which I like a lot."

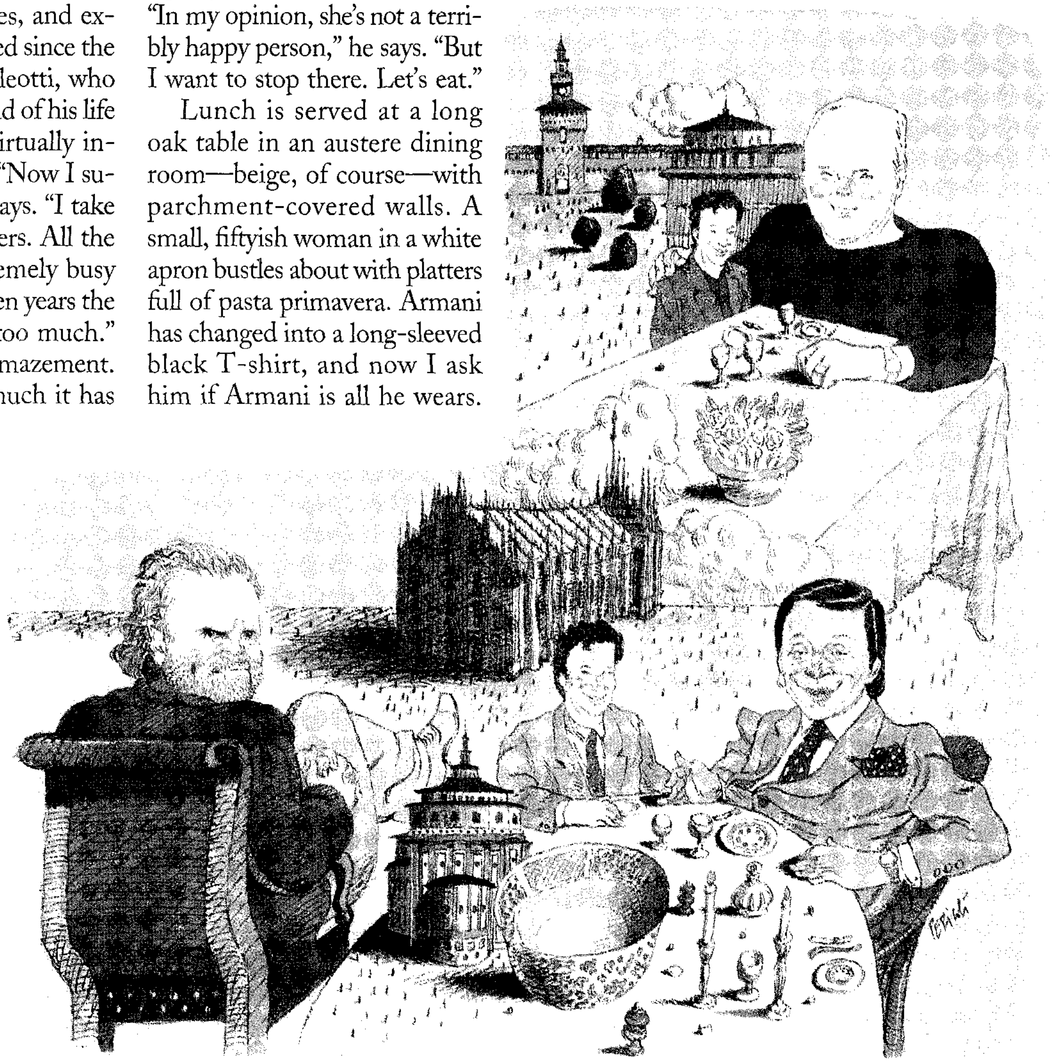
Made by whom?

"I don't want to say. Telling you the country is enough."

But he is relaxing as we talk, his gestures expanding; even the soul-freezing eyes are beginning to dance. Armani has a reputation for being arrogant and forbidding—"He thinks he's God," one Milanese insider told me—and it is true that his rather stolid mien is unusual in the world of Italian fashion. Once he opens up, though, he is welcoming, even loquacious; he plainly likes to laugh. "People who know me don't find that I'm the classic creative person," he says. "They're amazed to find me the way I am."

"How's that?" I ask him.

"You know, creative people in fashion have a very romantic image—or a deca-



The author and, clockwise from top, Armani, Valentino, and Versace.

WOMEN GOING

You know the ordinary ways they go
from you and from the stark daylight
staring through an open door. The girl
leans her lips to the beak of a dove
she's holding against her heart as if
insinuating the best way out and back
and whispering, *Now I have to go.*
On a stone doorpost the young wife
arches her stopped body, one hand
flat across her belly, the other
raised to straighten the seamless veil
through which the full moons of her earrings
just appear, signalling a change of state
and no way back to the here and now
of things, to the sweet-tasting open air
she's been breathing. The lady of the house
holds up one necklace after another
chosen from the jewel box a servant offers
and eyes the way it might belong
between the jut of her neckbone
and where her breasts begin, fitting her
for the road that opens ahead now
and night falling: *This one*, she says
at last, choosing the pearls with a clasp
in the shape of a silver wishbone. And now
across the busy street you see a man
leaning into the back of a taxi where
a woman's face is barely visible looking
back into his face and not flinching
as they dispossess each other into absence,
the door in that black cloud closing over
whatever it is they say above the roar
of rush-hour traffic. Briefly he bends
away, and you know when he looks again
she'll be gone and in her place will be
this absence beating its stone wings
over every ordinary corner of the day
she's left, and left him in.

—Eamon Grennan

dent one," he says. "They're surrounded by weird people. I can't explain it, but you know who I mean. So when people meet me they say, 'But you're just like an office worker.' And that's what I wanted. I wanted to create fashion, but I wanted fashion to seem like a job like any other, like working in a bank. With the same discipline, and without taking advantage of the things this business can offer."

Armani resembles no office worker I've ever met, but I let it pass. As veal cutlets on a bed of mashed potatoes are set before us, I ask him what those "things" are—the ones he has refused to take advantage of.

"Well, being a man, and having been a rich, good-looking, famous man, I could have had an endless supply of people. For sex, for example. I never did that. It didn't seem right to me to take advantage of my position."

Was he tempted?

"Sometimes I realized that it was a sacrifice not to take advantage. It's almost funny. Every so often, I go out and I see that people are very obsequious and put me on a different level. And I don't like it. Look at me. When I work from morning to night and dedicate myself to this company, I can't feel any different from a normal employee. I've reached sixty, but I feel like thirty, because I haven't really lived for the last thirty years. I remember my life from three to thirty years of age, and that's it—after that, I don't remember a thing. My happiness is very closely linked to work—to the success of an aspect of business, or an article in the paper, or getting the cover of *Time*. I have very little personal satisfaction. Almost none."

Yet Armani looks oddly pleased. "Listen," he says. "I couldn't have done anything differently. This is how I am. My youth was just after the war in a very small, provincial town. It was very, very difficult telling my mother I wanted to be a designer. It was ridiculous. She said, 'What is design?' " Armani's mother, a housewife in the northern Italian town of Piacenza (where Armani's father ran a small trucking company), expected her son to become a doctor, and, indeed, Armani spent two years in medical school before dropping out to perform the military service required of Italian men. He never went back. Instead, he became a buyer and sometime window decorator at La Rinascente, Milan's famous department store. Then, in 1964, he was hired by Nino Cerruti to design its menswear line, Hitman. "When I started working seriously, no one even knew the word 'designer,' " he says. "In those days, doing what I was doing—it was ridiculous. I've always had a strong sense of the ridiculous. A very strong sense. Certain things shouldn't be done, simply because they're ridiculous."

"Like what?"

"Like dancing. When I go to a club, people always say, 'Hey, why don't you dance?' Well, it's because when you're sixty years old you can't go out dancing in a club."

Perhaps I begin to understand what people mean when they say Armani's clothes make them feel secure: wearing Armani means never looking ridiculous. You don an air of self-denial along with your jacket; you signal that you've earned your place in the sodality of Armani achievers by dint of sacrifice, hard work, the prudent nurturance of talents and skills. If other designers' clothes tell the world you're fun in bed, Armani's clothes tell the world you're desirable for another reason: you know how to live.

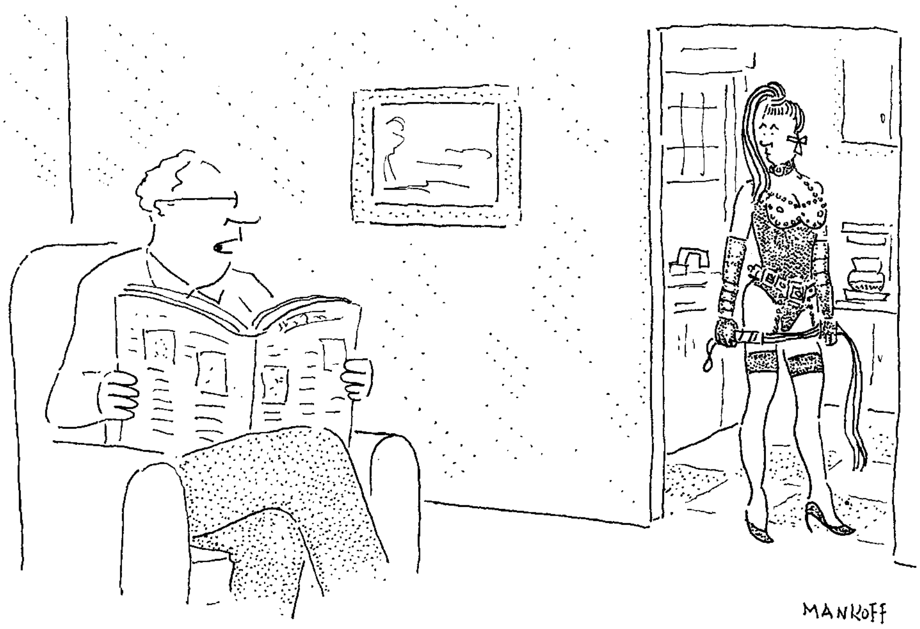
A mesclun salad arrives, and I innocently bring up what turns out to be a sore subject. In 1975, when Armani established his own firm, he was a men's designer. But it was when he translated his vision into women's clothes that his style swept the world. The agency of that translation was the unstructured jacket—or, as Armani now puts it, "that damned jacket." Just mentioning the thing sets him off on a kind of sermonette.

"The jacket, the jacket—what do you want to know about it?" he asks. "Why the jacket caused an explosion? Because I started a new way to wear the jacket. A man is born with a jacket. Women, through, married my jacket—they lived with it as if it were a man. But jackets aren't my only thing. There were my first black dresses that had a clean line without any shoulder pads. I sent the girls out with them, just holding roses, and the fashion editors said they'd never seen such a pure dress. That had nothing to do with jackets. Or there were some smaller and bigger inventions, like deëmphasizing an evening dress by pairing it with low-heeled shoes or with lace-up canvas shoes. And many other things. The Oriental influence. Yves Saint Laurent did it, too, and I respect and understand him completely, but he did more costume-like fashion. I wanted things you could wear and sell anywhere, so I removed the theatrical aspect and made it all very accessible. That's my contribution to fashion, more than the jacket. I feel *desperate* when someone talks to me about the jacket."

But if he is genuinely indignant he shows no sign of it—actually, a little grin is frisking at the corners of his mouth. "This isn't an interview, it's a confession," he says, and his smile broadens.

Pineapples, cut into chunks, are set before us, and now I venture a question about another potential sore subject—his rumored rivalry with Gianni Versace.

Armani, who rarely uses supermodels like Naomi Campbell and Christy Turlington on the runway, has for years carped obliquely at Versace, who frequently does. "If you make ugly fashions, then maybe you need Claudia Schiffer," he once told a reporter. Today, he is mildly more restrained. "Versace has his clientele, and that's not the clientele I want," he says. "It's good for there to be some competition, but on the personal level—well, I've never had an argument with Versace. I've become successful with eight different shades of beige. Versace—Versace took another route, and you can judge that for yourself."



"For God's sake, Edith, I'm trying to read the paper!"

• •

TEA, MILAN: The route Versace took is visible in the streets of Milan, where women and men alike are wearing his elaborate, blousy shirts—the ones with all the golden curlicues, the chrysanthemums and the medallions and the leopard spots and the Medusa heads. If Armani is about tastefulness, Versace is about letting it all hang out. He makes clothes of shiny metal, of rubber, of luxurious silk whose printed patterns scream at you. He makes "bondage dresses," with thickets of ensnaring straps; he makes suits that squeeze the body and slitted skirts that winkingly expose it; he makes clothes for rock stars and for models who don't want to be taken for anything but models. "I am very superficial," he admits cheerfully. "But how deep is my superficial? There is a thing Nietzsche say: The Greeks are superficial, but their superficial is profound. That is my motto. Because everything has to be light. If not, it's no sense. The life is so heavy today. You watch TV and Bosnia. The Pope. Abortion." He heaves a theatrical sigh. "Give me a break. You know?"

Gianni Versace is a jolly little man with a broad forehead, a deep tan, and a modish gray beard. He is wearing Versace jeans, a black Versace T-shirt, a Versace watch, and black Versace shoes, which look like ordinary suède loafers except that the buckles are garish gold Medusa heads—Versace's symbol. "There is one thing, if you want to know, I don't wear of Versace," he says. "It's sunglasses. Why? They don't fit me. I'm very big—my head." Versace, who speaks enough English to allow me to dispense with a translator, has a high, peppery voice and a caressing grin, and we are sitting in a salon in the middle of his apartment, which occupies the second floor of a seventeenth-century palace. The rest of the building houses his company—offices, workrooms for seamstresses and designers, libraries, even an underground pool, sauna, and gym. His apartment is half madhouse, half museum. The floors are Cosmatesque, but are done in tropical woods; the walls are painted with trompe-l'oeil columns and domes; the furniture ranges from seventeenth-century Lombard to Empire period; and there are Roman statues everywhere, observing us from little plinths.

"You're not drinking your tea," says Versace's companion, Antonio D'Amico, who has dark eyes, Julius Caesar hair, and a fashionable two days' growth of beard. D'Amico translates his friend's designs for some of the Versace licensees: Istante, Versace Sport, and Versatile (a line for, in Versace's words, "big lady"). I am wearing an elderly Versace sports jacket—the eighties kind, with padded shoulders that make me look like a mildly stunted right tackle—and Versace eyes it approvingly, concluding that, since I own a Versace, I must be rich. "I don't think people want cheap things," he says. "For us, the quality always must be super. Even with my new housewares line—they're so expensive! I want first choice of everything. I am the only designer in the world who do patterns of twenty-nine to thirty-five color. If you want quality, you know where to go—you go Hermès, Chanel, Versace." He claps his hands. "If you want other things, you can go Calvin Klein, Giorgio Armani—whatever. You know, sometimes people think I'm crazy! But I don't really care about price. And these expensive things still sell the best."

They certainly sell well. Versace's various lines brought in some six hundred and fifty million dollars in sales last year, and his companies employ nearly a thousand people. He also regularly produces fat illustrated art books about his work, and he has made a sideline of designing theatrical costumes for productions by Robert Wilson, Maurice Béjart, Roland Petit, and John Cox. Like most Italian designers worthy of the name, he owns lots of houses, claims an aversion to going out at night, employs as many family members as he can (not just Santo but his sister, Donatella, and her husband, Paul Beck), and insists, above all, that it's not the clothes that count, it's the person inside them.

"My hero is Picasso," he says. "I really love even the way he dress, with his little underwear. To me he is the most elegant person in the world. He shows you don't need to be dressed to be elegant. Such a sense of liberation. The next book I am doing is called 'Men Without Ties.' That doesn't mean you don't have to wear the tie. That means you don't have to have constriction. I am working—I am *screaming*—to try to take women and men away from taboo. Fashion is not just a piece of fabric. No, no, no. It's an attitude, it's a way to express. It's you. I don't want they notice Versace or Chanel. I want they notice the woman first. From the moment I started to do this work, when I was a child in my mother's atelier—it was in Reggio di Calabria, very bourgeois. All the women come in, and first I look at the women. I never look at the clothing she wear. I try to understand the way she move, the way she is, and I try to give advice to her—I was fourteen

THE COSÌ FAN TUTTI DEFENSE

So far, the designers questioned in Italy's financial scandals have suffered only a loss of face. But in an industry based on image, that's no small punishment.

BY ALAN FRIEDMAN

THERE is a memorable scene in "The Wizard of Oz" in which Dorothy and her fellow-travellers stand transfixed by the Wizard's fulminating presence until Toto tugs aside a curtain and reveals the levers and pulleys behind the magic. This is roughly what happened a few weeks ago in the ethereal world of Milanese fashion. Judge Antonio Di Pietro, the hero of Italy's long-running corruption scandal, called in more than half a dozen of fashion's biggest names and caused them to confess to paying substantial bribes to a band of rogue tax inspectors.

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The fact that the scandal touched such well-known companies as Armani, Versace, Ferré and Krizia was at first quite surprising to most Italians, but it paled as Di Pietro brought out other, still more startling allegations—for instance, that former Prime Minister Bettino Craxi had stashed millions of dollars of bribes in Swiss bank accounts. And even that was nothing compared with the increasingly vitriolic war of words between the current Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, and the Milan-based investigating judges, who have hinted that they may soon indict Berlusconi himself.

For the Milanese fashion world, however, the whole business has been traumatic, especially because the interrogations occurred just before the runway shows for next year's spring and summer collections. "Contrary to what the fashion people assume, we did not plot to embarrass them," one of the top investigating judges said to me recently. This judge, who spoke only on condition that he not be named in print, stressed that the fashion designers of Milan should not be too self-righteous—should not see themselves as being somehow more "special" than the thousands of other businessmen and politicians who have been caught up in the corruption investigation, which bears the code name Operation Clean Hands.

Yet the fashion designers of Milan *do* consider themselves different. (For example, shortly after Gianfranco Ferrè was interrogated by Judge Di Pietro, he summed up his reaction in an interview with the Milan daily *Corriere della Sera* in rather more aesthetic than legal terms, describing the judge as "simpatico, very intelligent, very well informed, and elegant in his gray cashmere jacket.") And they have not been pleased by their starring role in what the Italian press has variously dubbed Armanigate and Operation Clean Skirts. The reason for their embarrassment is evident: in fashion, image is everything. It seems clear that most of the designers were indeed victims of extortion by tax inspectors, but far more striking than their confessions have been their reactions: the designers have either portrayed themselves as supremely innocent victims or become vociferous cheerleaders for Di Pietro. The main defense offered is "*Così fan tutti*": "Everybody does it."

ALDO PINTO, who, with his wife, the designer Mariuccia Mandelli, runs Krizia, was characteristically blunt in his analysis of the effect of the scandal on the business. "From a commercial point of view," he said, "there has been no effect, because the buyer doesn't care: if he likes the clothes, he buys them." He also noted that the whole affair had been "incredible advertising." Even so, both Pinto and Mandelli conveyed a sense of outrage at having been asked to make the payments—an event that occurred early in 1990. Pinto recalled his wife "screaming and shouting at the request," although, he added, the practice of such payoffs was "*normalissimo*" at the time.

What is fascinating about Krizia's payments, which Pinto said totalled two hundred and sixty thousand dollars, was that the tax inspectors had come up with a rather creative payment mechanism. "They said they had a consulting company abroad, in Gibraltar, and that they would give us a phony contract and invoice us for consulting about Eastern Europe," he explained. "All we had to do was send the invoices to our bank and arrange the payments. And they said we could even deduct the payments from our taxes."

I asked Mandelli if she had considered reporting the tax inspectors to the police. She replied that she had had no choice but to pay eventually, because otherwise "they would have continued to interfere with our work." When she was called in for questioning, she said, "I was very happy, because finally I could tell the story. . . . I had documents in my hands—the consulting contract and invoices."

A few hundred yards away from Krizia's headquarters, at Gianni Versace's elegant palazzo on Via della Spiga, I listened to a similar story from Gianni's elder brother, Santo Versace, who manages the business. Santo recalled the exact date when the tax inspectors arrived at Versace: January 17, 1990. They stayed for about five months and, Santo recounted, "were in no hurry to leave." When the tax inspectors asked for money, his first reaction was "to tell them to go to hell." Santo declined to disclose the size of their initial request, but I learned elsewhere in Milan that it was about six hundred thousand dollars. After months of negotiations, the inspectors lowered their demands to around a hundred and seventy thousand dollars. "They paralyzed us. The only way to get rid of them was to pay them off," Santo said. He added that the money came from his personal checking account.

When I asked Santo why he hadn't called the police, he said that it had been very difficult to contemplate such a "rebellion" before Judge Di Pietro began his nvestigation, two years ago. "Remember, Italian resistance to Fascism began only in 1943, when the Allies arrived in Italy," he pointed out. When I asked if he felt any guilt, he said, "No, absolutely none, because this was the unwritten law at the time." He added, "The tax inspectors behaved like Gestapo agents."

The king of Italian fashion, Giorgio Armani, who has a reputation as a purist, told me that being called in for questioning by Di Pietro was "a shock." I wondered if he wasn't being a bit disingenuous, but he offered a soul-searching and detailed explanation of what has evidently been an exceedingly painful experience for him: admitting that he paid a bribe of about sixty-six thousand dollars to tax inspectors who had descended on his firm. In the spring of 1990, after inspectors had been at Armani's administrative offices for a month, they said they wanted to meet Armani himself. "They said that they wanted to be received by me because I was an important person," he recalled. "They were here for just fifteen minutes, and we did not speak of money. They asked my tax adviser for money afterward."

Armani appeared uncomfortable when I asked if he had been personally involved at any stage, but he responded quickly. "I authorized the payment," he said. "It wasn't company funds but my personal money. I gave my tax adviser an envelope with the cash." And how did he feel now that he had admitted that to Judge Di Pietro? "I consider myself one of many who had to pay, and it was hard to digest, what with all the rigor and cleanliness that govern my life and my aesthetic."

In a later conversation, he told me (as he had recently told Judge Di Pietro) that in fact in 1989 he had made another payment, totalling about two hundred thousand dollars. This money had also come from his personal funds and had also gone to tax inspectors.

Like some of his peers, Armani had thought of reporting the demands to the police, "but to me it seemed risky in terms of the consequences." Now, just weeks after the scandal had come to light, Armani said that most people saw him as a victim. I asked if he was one, and he replied that he was "a victim of the system, and personally guilty of accepting that system."

Armani confirmed that "the investigation is still under way," and concluded, haltingly, "For me and other entrepreneurs, there is the presumption of bribery. It is up to the judicial investigations to determine whether I was guilty of corruption or whether I was the subject of extortion. As far as Di Pietro is concerned, he waited until our fashion shows were finished before he asked me to come back for further discussions, and I think it was a courtesy."

The explanations offered by the Milanese designers are similar to those being offered by many other industrialists implicated in the scandal. Less than a year ago, Prime Minister Berlusconi resigned from Fininvest, a multibillion-dollar media and publishing group, to enter politics. When I went to see Berlusconi in August, on behalf of the *International Herald Tribune*, for which I am a Paris-based correspondent, he admitted that his company had paid small bribes to tax inspectors, and he maintained that the payments resulted from extortion. Berlusconi's contention was that making the payments should not be considered a crime, because "the guilty party is the person who solicits the bribes, while the innocent victim is the person who pays."

In Milan, at least, the tax inspectors are facing harsh consequences. Several of them have already been arrested, and judicial sources in Milan expect some to be convicted and to serve sentences of up to five years. As for the designers and fashion executives who have confessed to paying bribes, they, too, are in theory subject to prosecution. Judicial sources have indicated, however, that it is highly unlikely that any of them will go to prison. "Heavy fines are much more likely," one official said. Indeed, the designers in Milan have suffered far less than others in the court of public opinion, because of their élite standing in Italian society as symbols of international success and style. The judges have, merely by calling them in and eliciting bribery confessions, made their main point—that corruption was endemic to the Italian system.

Nearly all the denizens of the Milanese fashion world agree that the greatest damage caused by their legal travails is a loss of face. Although revenues and profits remain intact—and, indeed, are likely to grow, thanks to a very successful reception of their recent shows by American and Japanese buyers—some top Italian designers have been temporarily shaken. Santo Versace said that eventually the investigation "will help us, because we are stronger now, and as naïve people we have been forced to mature." ♦

years old. And these women trusted me. My mother's atelier, it was like a school."

"What did you learn there?" I ask.

"I learn the way to cut," he says. "The true story about the designers, they don't really know nothing about the body. The only Italian who know the way to cut is Valentino. The other are so out of proportion—they don't really know. One of them was just doing display window at Rinascente"—this, of course, is a jab at Armani—"and another one was selling whatever. That is the problem of our work today. There isn't any more artisans. And the next generation will be worse. They just care about money today. I care about money, too, but for my freedom, not only for the business."

At forty-seven, Versace has plenty of money; he has been enormously successful almost from the moment he opened his own firm, in 1978, after years of designing for Genny, Complice, Mario Valentino, and Callaghan. "But I don't really respect money," he says. "I really fuck off money. I can spend three million dollar in two hours. And I did! I go shopping one day in Paris buying things for my house in Miami. That night, I come back home, and I see the figure I spent—oh, I start to dance, to smile. I'm so crazy, I love myself—I want to kiss myself! I love to buy for Miami. I love Lake Como, and I love Miami—I need both. I always say, Proust and Batman—you need both."

Well, yes, but Versace's work has always listed sharply toward Batman. He is indeed a superficial designer, but perhaps it is not going too far to say that he makes his fascination with surfaces persuasive, if not altogether profound. When he talks of Men Without Ties, one thinks of those noisy silk shirts of his, which are themselves like giant ties, blown up to cover the entire torso. They function as a kind of tattoo, a skin so profusely decorated that it comes to seem something other than skin, something inorganic—a fabric worn by its owner to make a statement or bear a message. A tattoo or a tie or a Versace shirt turns its wearer inside out: it displays what he or she usually keeps hidden—his or her psychology, likes and dislikes, sense of self. Or so it seems. But, of course, what really gets displayed isn't the wearer's own personal message—it's Versace's message, available to anybody who can afford to buy it. Versace's clothes are paradoxical. They expose one and at the same time conceal one all the more.

"If you need something quiet, maybe you go to another designer," Versace says. "But Versace is not only these very exciting things. If you go in the shop, there is so many gray jackets, and blue, and simple T-shirts. I don't think I'm so creative. I'm so boring classic. I just fit the classic to the times. I modernize. I look at the women, I look at the street. I have a sense of history—I know all things will come back. Then I design a lot. I design almost one thousand sketch every season, and I pick up the hundred I like the best. And then, when I fit, I have always women around me, or men. And I ask all the time, 'Will you wear that?' If two women say no, it's out. I cancel. I don't have to please my ego. I have to please my customer. I have to be real."

DINNER, ROME: Reality check. I am on a plane to Rome. (You will by now have guessed that all this eating and schmoozing was not confined to a single day.) I am reading a fashion magazine, and I am scratching my head over it, the way I always scratch my head when I read about fashion. This is because the language of fashion is peculiarly porous. People are always saying something like "The look this year is strong but not aggressive, sexy but secure, glamorous but also feminine, with a new soft silhouette, colors that are sometimes bold, sometimes muted . . ." Was there ever a season in which fashion experts were not announcing the very same stuff in the very same words? Were there years in which the trumpeted look was aggressive, weak, unsexy, insecure, unglamorous, unfeminine, hard? Or is it possible that the language of fashion is subtly encoded to exclude the neophyte, leaving the cognoscenti to discern seasonal differences by interpreting, say, the subtleties of punctuation?

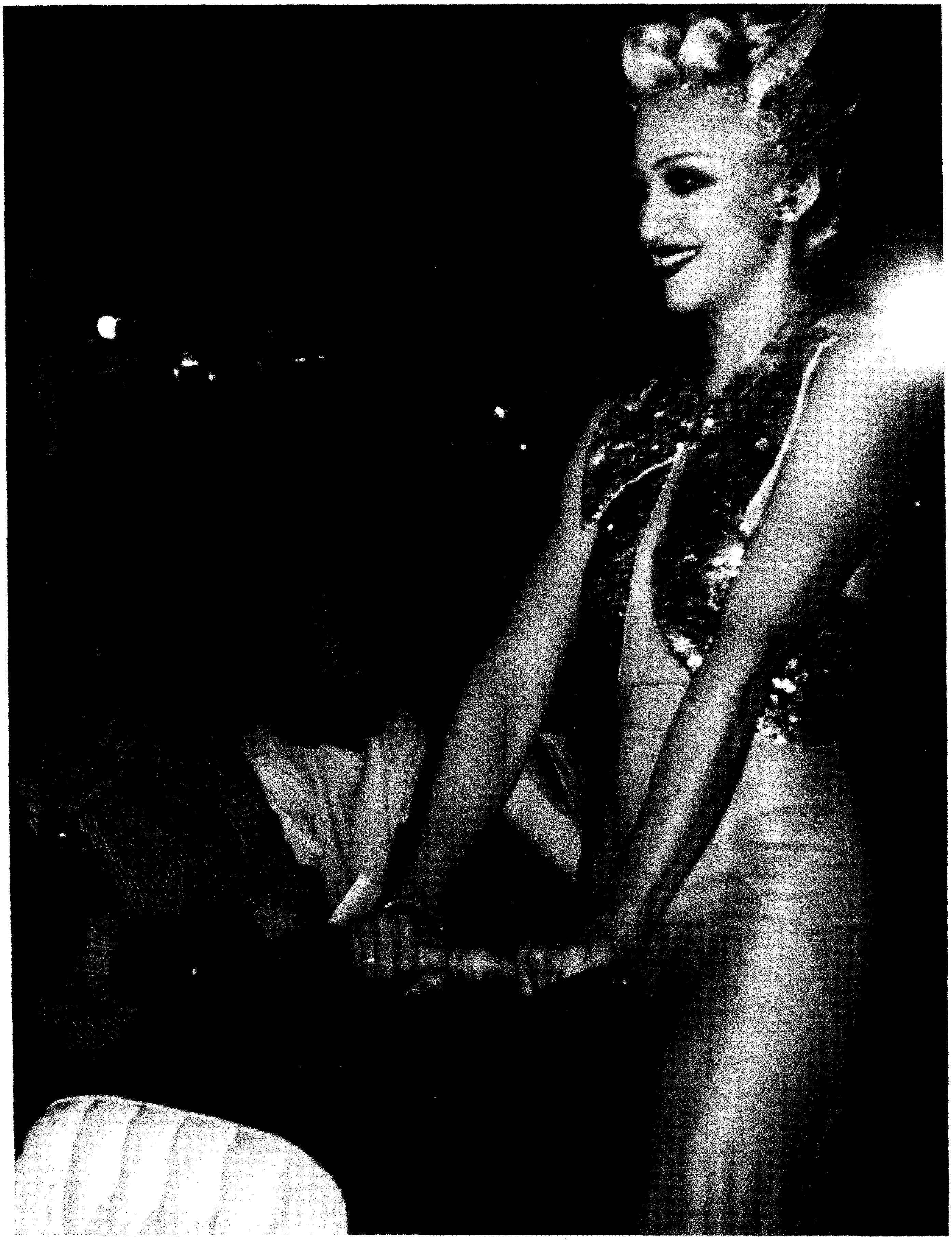
As it turns out, Valentino, the lord paramount of Italian fashion, feels much the way I do: he detests Fashionspeak, and would prefer to spend our entire dinner without it. Valentino, whose full name is Valentino Garavani, was born sixty-one years ago in Voghera, near Milan, but he long since abandoned the capital of Italian design for the capital of all Italy; his company is housed in the five-story Palazzo Mignanelli, which has a town square practically to itself, right next to Rome's Spanish Steps. He has been designing on his own since 1959—nearly two decades before Armani and Versace made their names—and his clients hark back to a world of *luxe* and *volupté* much grander than that of the rock stars and captains of industry his countrymen cater to. Valentino is not a ready-to-wear designer adapting himself to haute couture; he is a genuine couturier. His clothes look classic, opulent, a little costume-like—defiantly prewar. He designed the dress in which Jackie Kennedy married Aristotle Onassis; he has been a favorite of Nancy Reagan, Babe Paley, Gloria Guinness, Marie-Hélène de Rothschild. He is, in short, almost French, and he takes a good deal of pride in having served his apprenticeship not in mere Milan but in Paris, at Jean Dessès and then at Guy Laroche.

Still, he must be an Italian designer at heart. Does he go out at night? Of course not. "I'm always downstairs with a tray, watching television." And does he own lots of houses and apartments? Naturally: in Rome, Gstaad, Capri, New York, and London, not to mention his fifty-metre yacht. And does he feel strongly that it's not the clothes that count but the person inside them, that Picasso looks great in just his underwear, or words to that effect?

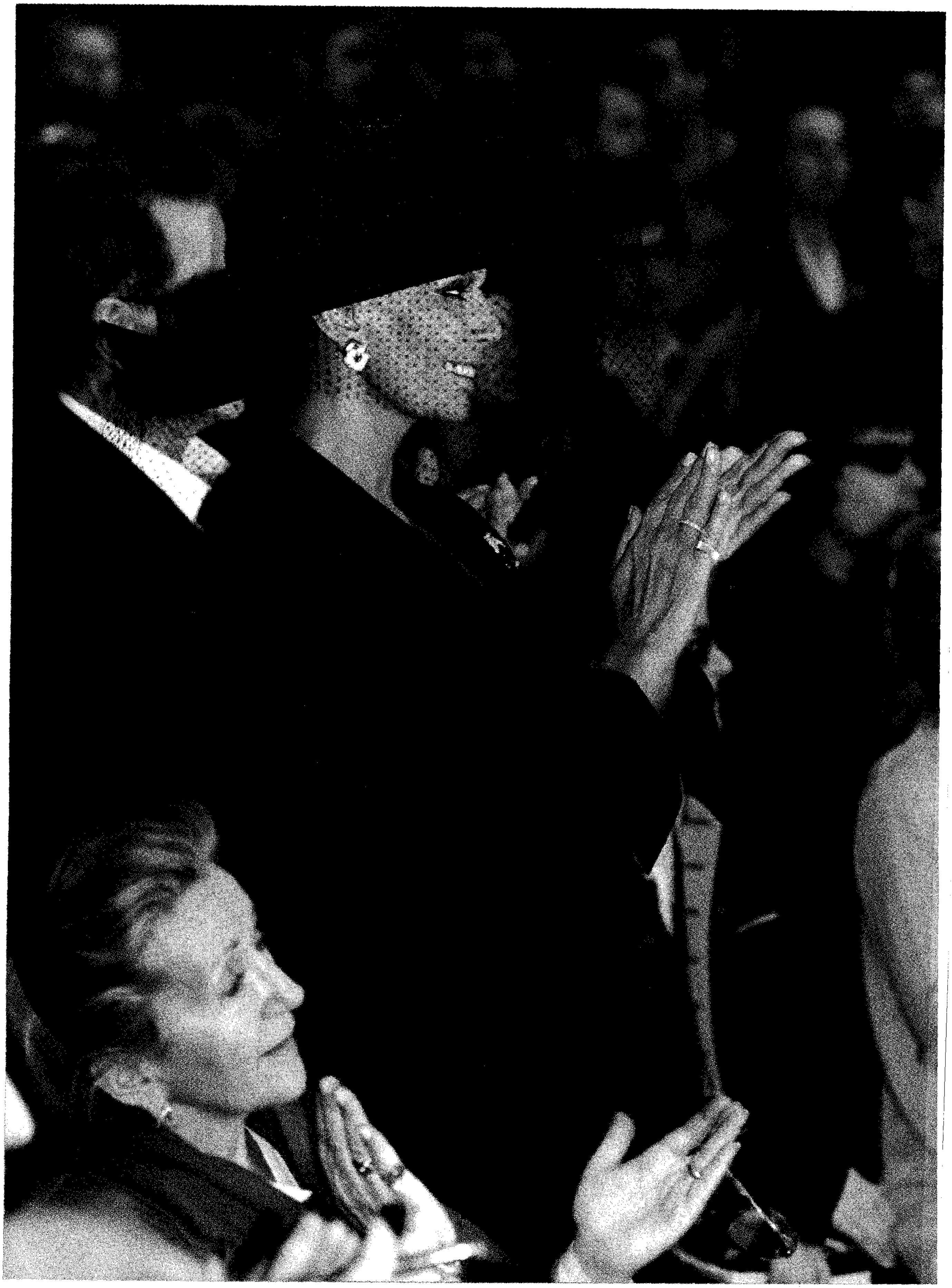
Well, not exactly. "We are return-

DECISIVE MOMENTS

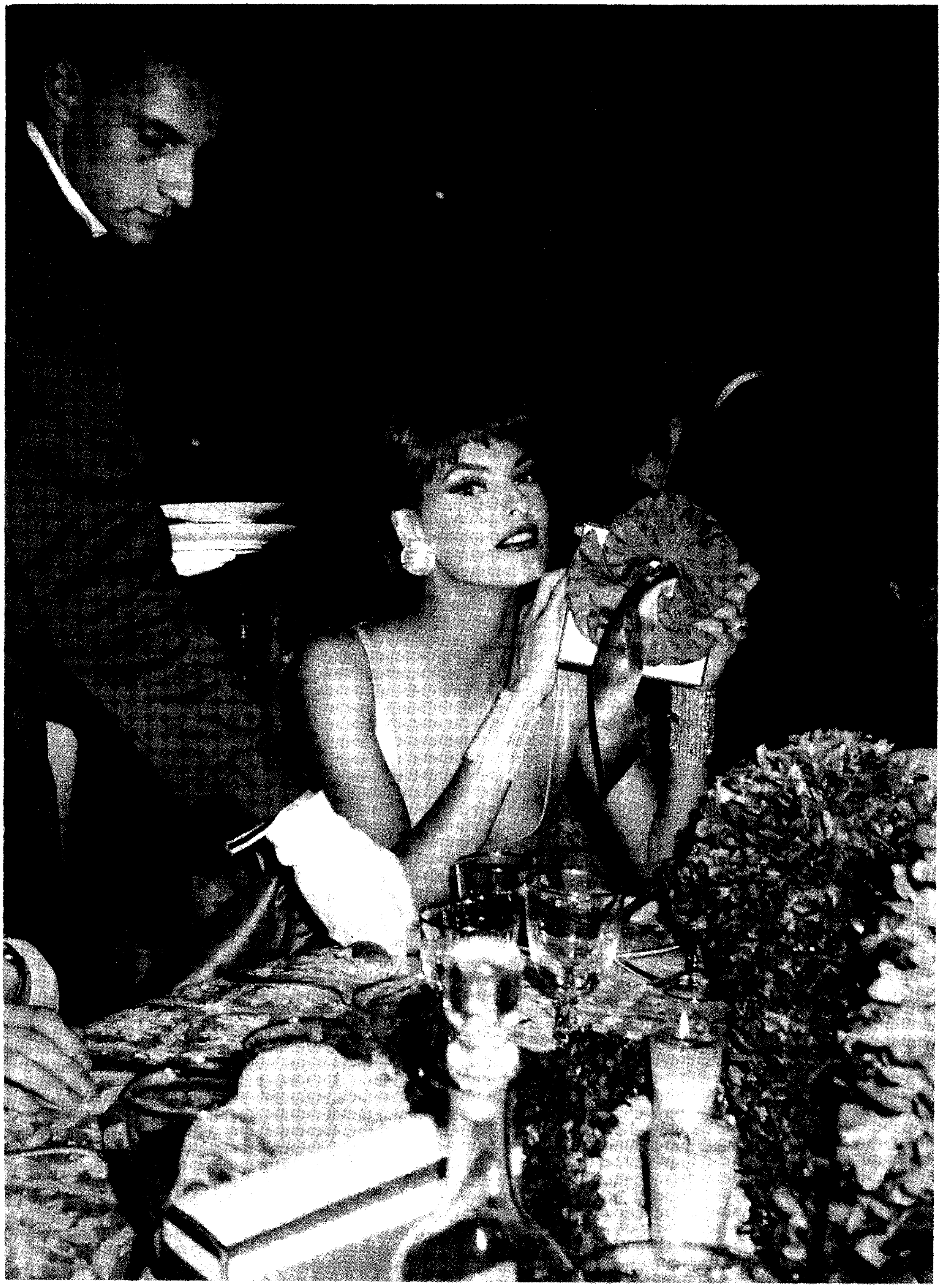
In her career as a fashion executive, fashion editor, and stylist, Marina Schiano, with her automatic camera in tow, has recorded the flurry and flash of fashion on and off the set, at parties, and at fashion shows. The following pictures were taken over the past few years, and they capture glamour where it lives.



Madonna on the runway at Jean Paul Gaultier's Paris ready-to-wear show.



Sophia Loren at Christian Dior's ready-to-wear show in Paris during the filming of Robert Altman's "Prêt-à-Porter."



Linda Evangelista at a ball in Rome given by Valentino.

ing now to glamour," he announces, in his best seigneurial tone. "And I am so happy. For a woman to be glamorous means when she is arriving in a place, people they have to turn and look at her. And we need to see this, because I think sometimes you really want to do just *beau*tiful dresses, very becoming dresses. First of all, to give the chance to young people to admire beauty. Because they don't know about beauty today. *They don't know!* I think they just want to see excitement—visually strong things. I looked at the magazines very recently—there was nothing nice to see. All the grunge look. I hated the grunge look. Oh! I hated. Hated. This was what for? Just to impress what? The people, they try to become ugly. They put their hair in a very bad way. But I think I am going to do a very big, big change now, because, really, people now want beauty, glamour—and to put on a runway things they can dream about again."

You will have noted that Valentino speaks charming, if less than immaculate, English. The way he looks, however, is more than immaculate. His tan is richer even than Versace's, and he is wearing a magnificent dark-gray suit with a subtly polka-dotted dark-blue tie and complementary pocket handkerchief. What is most remarkable about his appearance, though, is his hair—a faintly unreal brown mass that sweeps back at the top and sides in a way that would probably look rakish if it were not completely immobile. From his manicured fingernails to his heart-shaped lips, Valentino is the most impeccably groomed person I think I've ever seen.

He calls his palace a villa, and it sits among gardens and groves several miles outside Rome, along the Appian Way. It is a dizzying place, full of porcelain animals, freestanding cases displaying rare books and antique china, Louis XV chairs and an Empire bed, a big Picasso, an unfinished Toulouse-Lautrec. When we sit down to eat, my plate is surrounded by glittering prizes: besides the gold tableware and the silver candlesticks, there is a small silver box that looks like a chair (it contains salt and is actually a replica of a seventeenth-century Russian throne) and a large silver instrument cast in the shape of an artichoke on its stalk: a pepper grinder. After salmon en croute with porcini mushrooms, and just before the vegetable risotto, I ask Valentino if his perfectionism accompanies everything he does. "Ah, yes," he says. "But this is my problem. Since I was a young, young boy, I want to see visually beautiful things. I was a very happy child. My family, they were simple, provincial people. Very wealthy, I have to tell you, very wealthy, but very simple people. I lived such a soft life, always without any trauma.

"I remember I was twelve years old, my sister, she took me to see a film. She took me to see 'Ziegfeld Girl,' and I think that film pushed me to be in fashion. I dreamed about seeing those beautiful women, those beautiful dresses—to me it was the maximum. I was really a dreamer boy."

"Was it connected with any sexual feeling?" I ask.

"No, it was purely aesthetic," he says. "To me, this is a perfect world. I'm never tired of beauty, of aesthetic things, of nice things around me. I tell you, even if I stay with my tray downstairs to have dinner and watch television, I want my tray perfect, with beautiful linen, with beautiful glasses, with beautiful china, with beautiful everything. I was always like this. Also, if I am cozy with two friends having spaghetti—you can have beauty also with spaghetti, no? No?"

Well, yes, but it does all sound a bit compulsive. I'm starting to wonder how many times a day Valentino washes his hands.

"Oh, this is my sickness," he agrees. "I am *sick!* I am not a normal person, because I am much too much concerned about perfection—clean things. I don't drink in a normal bar, no. The glass must be perfect. I am a very unhappy person when I travel. I wish to be like many, many people—when they travel, they eat everything, they drink from every glass. I don't. I think it's a sort of disease."

I ask him what he does when he's with someone who is—well, unkempt, or who wears clothes he doesn't like. (I have managed to arrive in a Valentino shirt, but the suit I have on is Armani.) "Oh, people can live the way they want," he says. "I'm not this spoiled. No. No, no, no, no, no. I am surrounded with people who have no taste, but everybody can do what they do. Why not? I am a very, very, very automated person. I want to see order, order, order, and everything clean. I don't want to see a wrinkled bed, where the bed is all wrinkled and people, they wake up and they leave the bed like this all day long. No, I don't want. There are so many things I don't want to see. I don't like to see messy. Sometimes I am very, very heavy with my people. Extremely heavy. Angry—oh!"

He stops in a kind of consternation, and for a few moments he toys with the back of his hair—the only part of his coiffure he can touch without marring its splendor. Then he sighs. "But I am not like in the past," he says. "This is a sort of yoga, when I try to put in my mind not to scream. Not to be excessive. This maybe comes with age, I don't know."

Sorbet is served—homemade sorbet, mind you, in three flavors, with freshly baked cookies on the side—and I ask him whether this rampant perfectionism affects the sort of clothes he designs. "Maybe," he says. "Maybe you can read in some of my dresses this sort of, let's say, mania. If I do a very simple chiffon dress for evening, there is a big simplicity, with an idea that is quite clean, like if I put this white tablecloth with nice crystal and everything."

"Well, your clothes are often simple, but they always have a twist," I say. "I've seen one of your models come out in kind of a plain white dress, but then she'll turn and there will be a slit in the side."

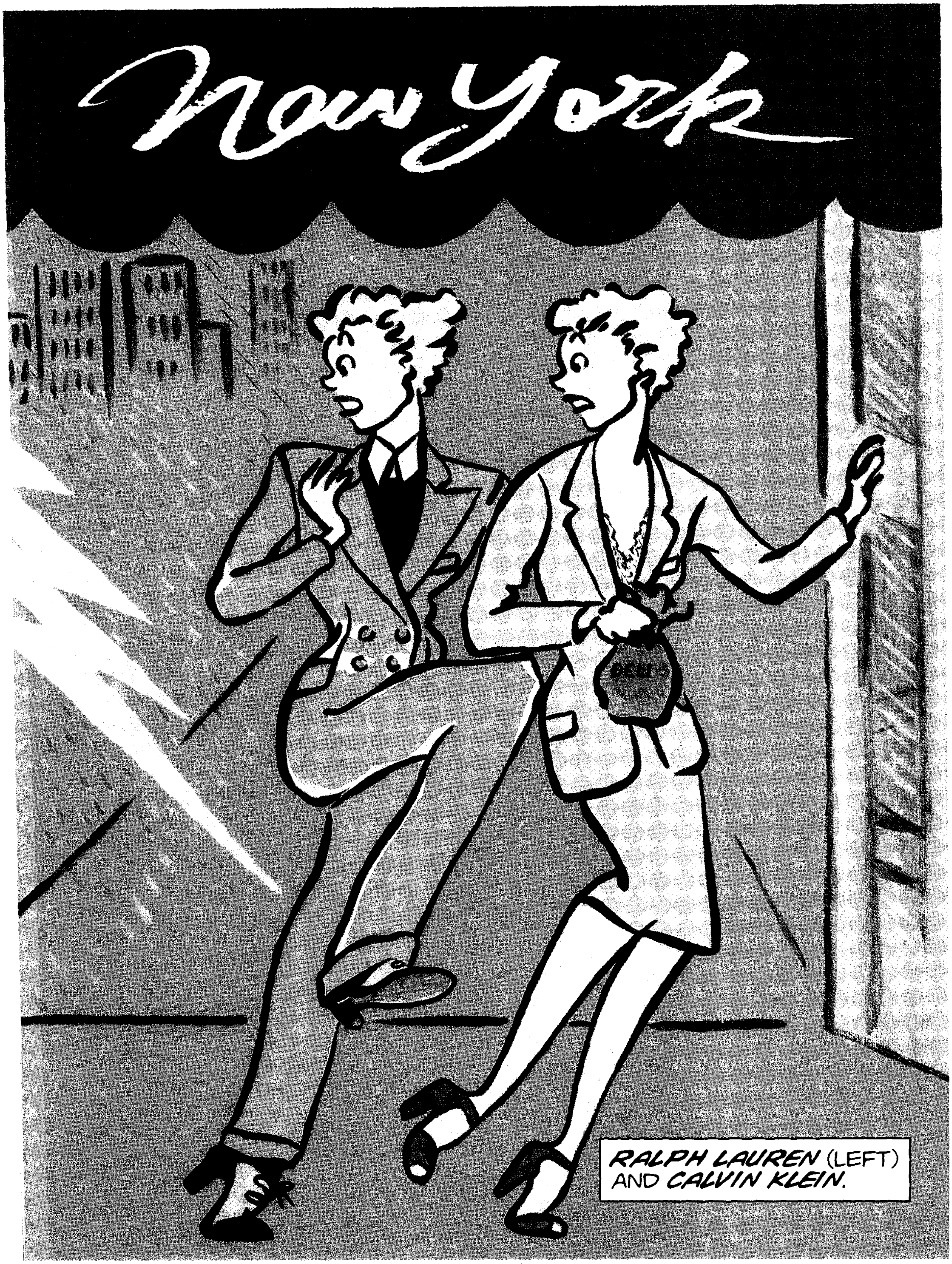
"Yes, I think fashion must be like this," he says. "Simple, good cut, but with that little detail that is charming, feminine, glamorous—enchanting. Now, for the new season we will put together very feminine dresses. The skirt, they are a little longer, just a little. Sexy. Beautiful naked legs, natural color."

"No more black stockings?"

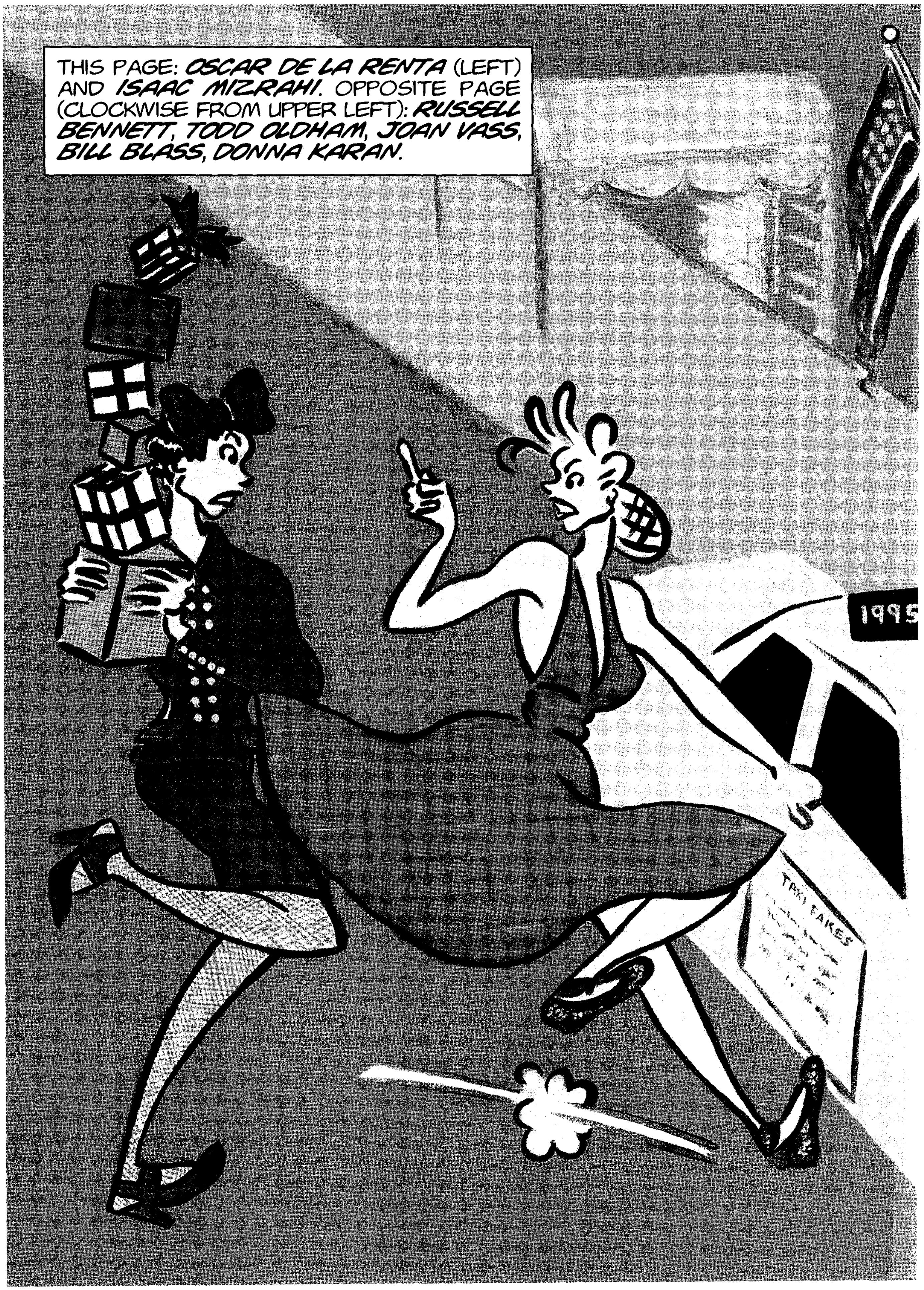
He points a finger skyward and wags it from side to side. "No, no, no, no, no, no. No. Go back to the beautiful legs color. High heels. And constructed pieces, with beautiful construction again. The floppy, the unconstructed"—he claps his hands—"over! Gone!"

And now, the meal ended, he sinks back in his chair, and his eyes dim a little. "My dear, it is such a long time that I do this work. I know the secret for any cut, for any drape, for any detail. I know how to do everything, from the day coat, the suit, the sport, the evening—everything. I really don't think about it anymore. There are people and when they create something they give so much energy, energy—they are so torturated. I'm not torturated, I'm sorry. I'm not suffering. I want to be happy when I design a dress. And I'm very happy when I create something that I like—something very, very beautiful." ♦

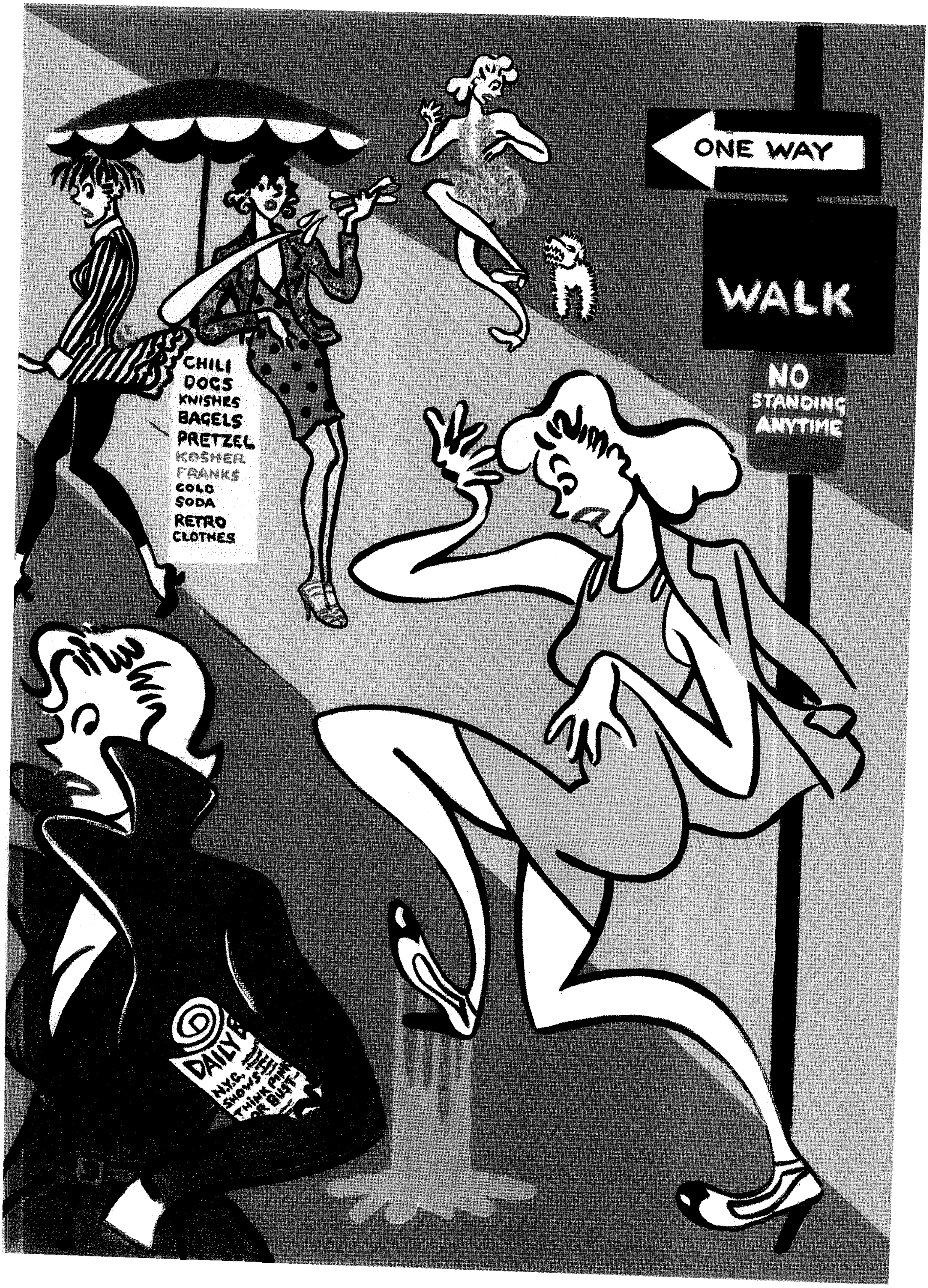
A PREVIEW OF THE SPRING 1995 NEW YORK COLLECTIONS · BY MICHAEL ROBERTS

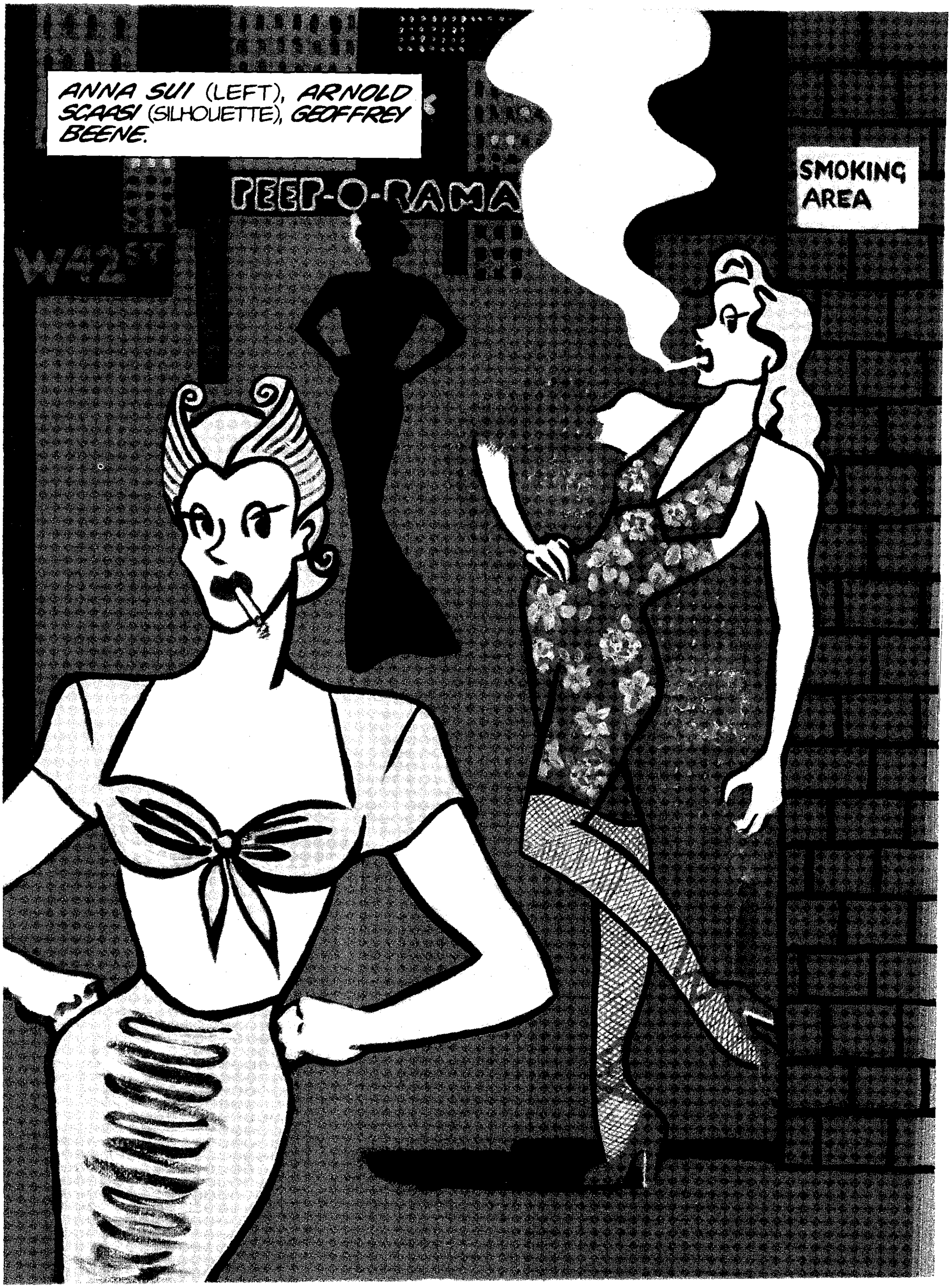

New York
DELI

RALPH LAUREN (LEFT) AND ***CALVIN KLEIN.***



THIS PAGE: ***OSCAR DE LA RENTA*** (LEFT) AND ***ISAAC MIZRAHI***. OPPOSITE PAGE (CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT): ***RUSSELL BENNETT***, ***TODD OLDHAM***, ***JOAN VASS***, ***BILL BLASS***, ***DONNA KARAN***.


ONE WAY
WALK
NO STANDING ANYTIME
CHILI DOGS
KNISHES
BAGELS
PRETZEL
KOSHER FRANKS
COLD SODA
RETRO CLOTHES
DAILY
N.Y.C. SHOWS PINK
THINK PINK OR BUST!



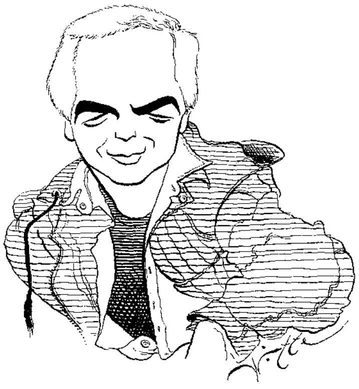
ANNA SUI (LEFT), ARNOLD SCAASI (SILHOUETTE), GEOFFREY BEENE.
PEEP-O-RAMA
W42ST
SMOKING AREA

MEDITATION

LAUREN'S HOME MOVIES

BY BRENDAN GILL

It appears to be Ralph Lauren's view of life, as it was Jay Gatsby's, that by acquiring the outward trappings and the perquisites of a certain set in society one becomes a member of it in good standing. But Lauren has gone further than Gatsby; he has imagined himself and, by implication, his customers to be members in good standing of groups that never existed. By his own account, the source of this make-believe is the movies that he went to as a boy in the Bronx, identifying himself with a variety of heroes: one day a virtuous cowboy like Gary Cooper, preparing to utter the first, halting words of love to a virginal Grace Kelly; the next day a devil-may-care man of the world like Cary Grant, speaking with a British accent and suavely allowing himself to be seduced by Audrey Hepburn. As a rule, movies are not thought to teach one how to make good in the real world; Lauren outwitted the rule by turning the real world into a movie.



Ralph Lauren: Exploring the possibilities of changing clothes and changing personalities.

The movie-Western culture that Lauren has sought to enter, and feels a close relationship to, is, of course, pure hokum. To confuse matters, Gary Cooper as a cowboy was also pure hokum. He devoted much of his later life to edg-ng his way into the very East Coast society that Gatsby was seeking to penetrate, and which has inspired another side of Lauren's imagination. His celebrated Polo logo was initially supposed o evoke memories of a golden past, n which a transplanted Anglophilia lourished on the playing fields of Old Westbury and the Myopia Hunt Club, on Boston's North Shore.

From the start, movie Westerns were never in need of real cowboys; the pioneering Harry Carey was born in the Bronx, and Tom Mix was a circus performer from Pennsylvania. Lauren accepts the movie West as an actual West, and so the fantasy that took shape in a darkened city movie theatre has been transformed, with the help of photographer Bruce Weber's lavish multipage narrative sequences—in which Lauren is sometimes pictured as the ideal wearer of his git-along-little-dogies work gear—into a virtual reality. Lauren has become Cooper's lanky, narrow-hipped sheriff, reduced to Tanagra scale. (Few movie cowboys have been as tall as Cooper; one thinks of Alan Ladd, Paul Newman, and Robert Redford, Tanagras all.) On Lauren's thirteen-thousand-acre outpost in Colorado, with its flawlessly tinted fencing surrounding a ranch so authentic in every detail as to guarantee its inauthenticity, the Laurens and their guests—or so one envisions—are seated about a blazing fire in faded dungarees, singing "Do not forsake me, oh, my darling!" as the hands of the grandfather clock approach high noon.

Lauren's empire appears to be concerned as much with interior decoration as with clothing. Half a century ago, if you were prepared to commission a house from Frank Lloyd Wright you also had to be prepared to throw away your accustomed household furnishings, however comfortable, in favor of furniture designed by Wright, however uncomfortable. In the same way, once we have consented to be dressed by Lauren we might as well consent to live inside the gorgeous melodrama of a Lauren environment. This is perhaps less effortful—and less expensive—if we choose to adopt Lauren's fictional cowboy domesticity, with its bare pine floors and Navajo blankets, than if we want to find our place in that opulent Gold Coast to which Gatsby coveted entry, or that Edwardian London which Lauren has reproduced in a grand limestone mansion on the southeast corner of Madison Avenue and Seventy-second Street.

The mansion, designed in the French Renaissance style, was built in the late eighteen-nineties by Gertrude Rhinelander Waldo. (She never lived in it; her husband died, and she was poorer than she had thought she was.) Long ago, it suffered the indignity of being divided up into shops and offices. Only Lauren, with his belief in happy endings, would have had the nerve to spend the millions of dollars necessary to bring the complex exterior of the mansion back to its original appearance (architectural preservationists have showered him with praise for this accomplishment) and to fill the newly created interior with a jostling plenitude of marble mantelpieces, wood panelling, and Oriental rugs. As it stands today, the mansion might be taken for the home of a dotty British peer of advanced years, who had possessed in his youth a discerning eye but a radically indiscriminate aesthetic appetite. Playing Lauren's game, we pretend to be surprised that virtually everything in the house is for sale. Browsing from floor to floor in the company of other wide-eyed customers, we make up an appropriate explanation: a family indiscretion has caused the dotty peer to be dispossessed, and Lauren has done the gentlemanly thing in taking over his digs and attempting to straighten out the mess he left behind.

Lauren has carried out and embodied his boyhood dreams with exceptional precision, but the dreams aren't exceptional in their nature. You don't build up a four-billion-dollar-a-year company on the strength of idiosyncratic personal fantasies, however vivid. Plainly, great numbers of people share Lauren's fantasies, including the supreme fantasy of believing that a change in clothing or a change in interior decoration can produce equivalent changes in personality. Lauren, then, may be correct in saying, as he often does, that he isn't a designer. Perhaps he comes closer to being a psychotherapist. Whether inadvertently or by calculation, Lauren has given a clinical twist to the old cliché "Clothes make the man." ♦

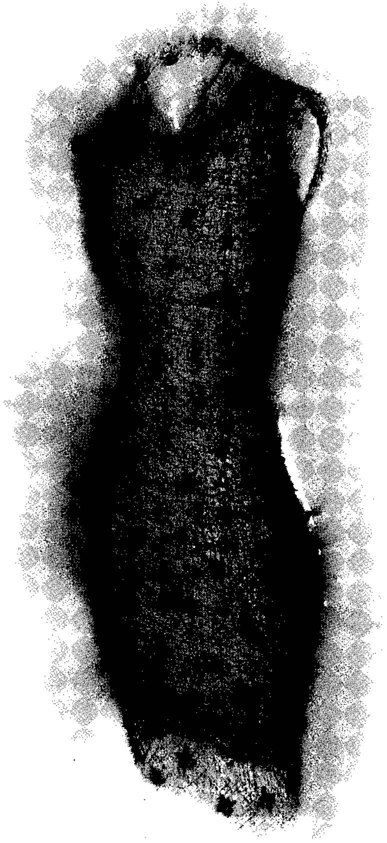
THE CREATIVE PROCESS

PORTRAIT OF A DRESS

How and why a rubber-and-lace dress made by Helmut Lang, the hero of the "counter-couture," captured this year's Zeitgeist.

BY HAL ESPEN

IT is immaculately nameless. Over the past eight months, many shorthand descriptions have appeared in the photo captions of magazines ("the slender and clingy dress in red rubber and lace," "*une robe droite sans manches en latex contrecollé de dentelle*"), but the dress eludes these literal formulas. Its identity is an emanation of impressionistic fashion-magazine copy ("hard-core glamour with a recklessness not seen since the '70's") and a reflection of the sky-rocketing reputation of its creator, the Austrian ready-to-wear designer Helmut Lang. When I visited Lang this fall, in the Vienna atelier where he works (he shows in Paris), I realized that I didn't know what to call the dress. Lang told me that it had no name, just an inventory number. I asked him how he would direct his assistant to bring a sample to his office. He grinned. "I would say, 'Get me the rubber dress,' " he replied.



The fetishistic association, Lang says, "has almost disappeared— until you wear it."

Calling it "the rubber dress" is a bit of a joke. The restraint of Lang's typically minimal approach mutes the sexual implications of the rubber, even as the design is energized by the juxtaposition of materials. The fetishistic association of the rubber, Lang says, "has almost disappeared—until you wear it. It's very personal. But it has almost disappeared from the look." The look is characterized more by the femininity of the lace sheath than by the underlying slip of very thin latex rubber. Still, the dress is both demure and erotic. It is formidably chic despite its nearly formless shape and rumpled fit. Nameless or not, it has been perhaps the most photographed dress of the season. According to the delirious calculus of futurity that gives fashion its premonitions, Helmut Lang's dress was the answer for 1994.

The dress was first shown last spring, in Paris. All the fashion editors in Europe and America seem to have simultaneously decided to publish pictures of it. "It has been in front of nearly every important camera on the planet" is how Lang puts it. He has a right to be a little boastful. Jürgen Teller and Bill Cunningham photographed the dress at Lang's show. Ellen Von Unwerth did it for the cover of French *Glamour.* Steven Meisel shot Nadja Auermann in the dress for Italian *Vogue.* The actress Traci Lords posed in the dress for Bettina Rheims in *Details.* Thierry LeGouès shot Amber Valletta in the dress for *W.* Naomi Campbell wore it for photographer Mario Testino in a session for *Allure.* ("It makes a squeaky sound when you put it on," Campbell said. "You're supposed to put on talcum powder first, so it won't stick.") It has appeared in *Dépèche Mode*, British *Elle*, *Marie Claire*, *20ANS*, *Mirabella*, and German *Vogue.*

LANG'S fall-winter show took place on the afternoon of March 6, 1994, and it was one of the hottest tickets of the Paris collections. There was widespread anticipation of a breakthrough for the designer. After eight years of producing Paris collections, Lang, who is thirty-eight, had developed a kind of cult following among younger buyers and journalists: they admired his innovative use of synthetic fabrics and his ability to create beautifully tailored outré concoctions: clear-vinyl jumpers, silk shirts that look like plastic trash bags, white patent-leather pants, reflective-metallic jeans. He kept his silhouettes clean, avoided froufrou of any kind, and evoked street wear and athletic clothing in wet-looking nylons and silks.

For all his wildness, Lang possessed an essential seriousness that made him a leader of what some had begun to call "counter-couture." His Austrian background and his insistence on continuing to live and work in Vienna—a place that has not been an influential fashion city for several centuries—made him seem exotic and mysterious. Most important, Lang was the ideal vanguard designer to herald the next big thing after grunge and waifdom: a techno-guru whose version of New Glamour didn't look like a revival of the seventies or of anything else in the ransacked closets of fashion's past.

When Lang starts to design a collection, he is keenly aware of what is expected of him. He told me he asks himself, "Do I know what I should know? Do I know what *they* want to know?" Lang felt that his previous show, for the spring-summer line, had been "very anarchistic," with "a hard-edged, music-scene feeling," and "a bit too trashy." In late 1993, he decided that his next direction would involve fewer images of slumming. "There was all this talk everywhere about dressing up coming back," he recalled. "The question was How do you get a new kind of elegance that doesn't look like what came before?"

He worked on various elements fo fall: black cashmere suits and black satin tuxedos; shiny, candy-colored nylon blouses and silk T-shirts; one-shoulde silk dresses; a long dress in flesh-tone nylon with a red textured-vinyl bodice and another nylon dress with a billow ing train. There were cashmere pants and leather pants, both with stripes down the sides and eight-inch cuffs, and a chartreuse brushed-cotton peacoat matched with orange pants. He decided that the collection also needed a certain kind of evening dress: everything seemed to be leading up to it. He knew he wanted to try to use classical lace, but he wanted to put it in some new context. He started to think about rubber.

LANG'S studio is on the fifth floor of a turn-of-the-century commercial building on a quiet street in Vienna's old central district. Most of the storefronts on the block are occupied by sleepy-looking wholesale-textile concerns. A few blocks away is the building where Sigmund Freud practiced psychoanalysis for four decades. During my visit, when I remarked to Lang on how stolid and bourgeois the citizens of Vienna seemed, he talked about the city's "Freudian aspect," saying, "Vienna looks quite clean. But sometimes, if you open the doors—whether the real ones, or just imagined doors—it's not as bourgeois as you imagine it." At the time, we were carefully—one might even say obsessively—studying the technical and sensual attributes of a sample version of his rubber dress. I knew what he meant.

I had seen many photographs of the dress, but seeing the dress itself and touching it was a revelation. It is a delicate and surprisingly lightweight object. (It weighs only five ounces.) There is something illusionistic about the synthesis of latex body and lace embossment: the materials seem at once perfectly mated and irreconcilably estranged. The lace is cut a bit larger than the rubber underlayer, to which it has been glued. The dress *smells* like rubber. It comes in four versions: black lace on black rubber, red lace on red rubber, red lace on black rubber, and pink lace on red rubber. The outer side of the rubber is glossy, but the inside of the black dress is a dark matte gray and the inside of the red dress is a milky pink, like the color of a pencil eraser.

The dress is made by hand in Vienna. It is as rare as a couture dress, because it has never been mass-produced. (Lang has switched from one Italian manufacturer to another and most of his fall '94 collection wasn't shipped. The scarcity of Lang pieces seems only to have intensified his éclat.) With the help of Susanne Bisovsky, one of his students at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, where he is an adjunct professor, Lang had experimented with various colors and thicknesses of pure-latex rubber before producing a mold capable of forming the inside layer of the dress as a single sheet. Lang's staff poured the two shades of liquid latex themselves, in his studio, and then assembled each dress, carefully pressing Chantilly lace onto the rubber pieces and then sewing the edges together.

Holding up one of the pink-on-red samples, Lang told me how pleased he was by the final shape he had settled on for the dress. "You have to find a form that doesn't kill the fabric," he told me. "And the fabric shouldn't kill the form of the dress. In this case, what the two fabrics are doing together is already so much that it can't bear a complicated shape anyway. I tried it with different lengths, and with long sleeves and then short sleeves. In the end, it became sleeveless and very simple, like a little cocktail dress—or a T-shirt dress. You can see both."

ALAS, it is next to impossible to actually buy the dress. Only ninety-nine of the dresses were made. The retail price was set at about eight hundred and fifty dollars. About eighty pieces were shipped to shops in New York, London, and Paris. Most of them were sold. A few more pieces were being sent to Barneys New York last week. Nothing like the dress will appear again in Lang's œuvre. "The idea has reached the final expression with this dress," the designer told me. "There is no rubber and lace in the next collection." ♦

PERSONAL HISTORY

HEAVY THREADS

Fresh out of university, the author landed on the King's Road in London—and got a sixties education in cool.

BY SALMAN RUSHDIE

IN the summer of 1967, which I do not recall anyone calling the "Summer of Love" back then, I rented a room in London directly above a legendary boutique—legendary, I mean, at the time; there was something about it that was instantly recognized as mythic—called Granny Takes a Trip. The apartment belonged to a woman named Judy Scutt, who made a lot of the clothes for the boutique, and whose son, Paul, was a university friend of mine. (They were members of a family famous in medical circles for having six toes on each foot, but in spite of the psychotropic spirit of the age they insisted, disappointingly, that they themselves were not Six-Toed Scutts.)

Granny Takes a Trip was at World's End, at the wrong end of the King's Road in Chelsea, but to the assorted heads and freaks who hung out there, it was the Mecca, the Olympus, the Kathmandu of hippie chic. Mick Jagger was rumored to wear the dresses. Every so often, John Lennon's white limo would stop outside, and a chauffeur would go into the shop, scoop up an armload of gear "for Cynthia," and disappear with it. German photographers with platoons of stone-faced models would arrive once or twice a week to use Granny's windows as backdrops for their spreads.

Granny's had famous windows. For a long time, there was a Warhol-style Marilyn painted over the glass. For a further long time, there was the front end of a real Mack Truck bursting out of a painted Lichtenstein-y explosion. Later, every boutique on the planet would boast an imitation Warhol Monroe or a Mack Truck exploding from the shop front, but Granny's was the first. Like "Gone with the Wind," it invented the clichés.

Inside Granny's, it was pitch dark. You went in through a heavy bead curtain and were instantly blinded. The air was heavy with incense and patchouli oil

"Without saying anything, bring out a black Homburg."

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and also with the aromas of what the police called Certain Substances. Psychedelic music, big on feedback, terrorized your eardrums. After a time, you became aware of a low purple glow, in which you could make out a few motionless shapes. These were probably clothes, probably for sale. You didn't like to ask. Granny's was a pretty scary place.

Granny's people were a little scornful of the brash boutique-land of the "right"—the Sloane Square end of the King's Road. All those Quant hairdos and thigh-high "snaky boots," all that shiny plastic, Vidal Sassoon, England-swings-like-a-pendulum-do palaver. All that *light*. It was almost as uncool as (*aargh*) Carnaby Street. Down there, people said "fab" and "groovy." At Granny's, you said "beautiful" to express mild approval, and, when you wanted to call something or someone beautiful, you said "really nice."

I started borrowing Paul's beads and bedspread jackets. I started nodding my head a lot, wisely. In the quest for cool, it helped that I was Indian.

"*India*, man," people said. "Far out."

"Yeah," I said, nodding. "Yeah."

"The Maharishi, man," people said. "Beautiful."

"Ravi Shankar, man," I said.

At this point, people usually ran out of Indians to talk about and we all just went on nodding, beatifically. "Right, right," they said. "*Right*."

In spite of coming from India, I was not cool. Paul was cool. Paul was what a girl in a teen movie had called "straight from the fridge." Paul had access to endless long-limbed girls and an equally endless supply of dope. He had a father in the music business. It would have been easy to hate Paul. One day, he persuaded me to pay twenty pounds to take part in a photo session for aspiring male models that was being run by a "friend" of his. He said I could wear his clothes. The "friend" took my money and was never seen again. My modelling career failed to take off.

"Wow," said Paul, first shaking and then nodding his head philosophically. "Bad scene."

At the heart of our little world was Sylvia. (I never knew her last name.) Sylvia ran the shop. She made Twiggy look like a teen-ager with a puppy-fat problem. She was very pale, probably because she spent her life sitting in the dark. Her lips were always black. She wore minidresses in black velvet or see-through white muslin: her vampire and dead-baby looks. She stood knock-kneed and pigeon-toed, after the fashion of the period, her feet forming a tiny, ferocious T. She wore immense silver knuckle-duster rings and a black flower in her hair. Half love child, half zombie, she was an awe-inspiring sign of the times. I had been there for several weeks without exchanging a single word with her, until one day I plucked up my courage and went into the shop.

Sylvia was a dim purple presence in the bottomless depths of the boutique.

"Hi," I said. "I just thought I'd drop in and introduce myself, since we're all living here, you know? I just thought it was time we got to know each other. I'm Salman." At this point, I kind of ran out of steam.

Sylvia loomed out of the dark, coming up close and staring, so that I could see the contempt on her face. Eventually, she shrugged.

"Conversation's dead, man," she said.

This was bad news. This was like heavy. Conversation was dead? Why hadn't I heard? Where had this been reported? I was and am a talkative sort of fellow, but I stood before Sylvia's scorn, stunned into silence. Like Paul Simon in "The Boxer," I was enthralled by the tribes of "ragged people," of whom Sylvia was clearly a dark princess; I wanted to be among them; I was "looking for the places only they would know." How unfair that I was doomed to be excluded from the inner circles of the counterculture, to be banned forever from where it was at, on account of my chattiness. Conversation was dead, and I didn't know the new language. I slunk tragically out of Sylvia's presence and barely spoke to her again.

Some weeks later, however, she taught me a second lesson about those unusual times. One day—I think it was a Saturday or a Sunday, and it was only around noon, so naturally nobody was up, and the shop was shut—the doorbell rang for such a long time that I struggled into a pair of red crushed-velvet flares and staggered downstairs. On the doorstep was an alien: a man in a business suit and matching mustache, with a briefcase in one hand and, in the other, a copy of a glossy magazine open at the page on which a model was wearing one of Granny's latest offerings.

"Good afternoon," said the alien. "I have a chain of shops in Lancashire . . ."

Sylvia, naked beneath a rather inadequate dressing gown, cigarette dripping from her lips, came down the stairs. The alien turned a deep shade of red, and his eyes started sliding around. I retreated.

"Yeah?" said Sylvia.

"Good afternoon," the alien finally managed. "I have a chain of shops in Lancashire selling ladies' fashions, and I am most interested in this particular garment as featured here. With whom would I speak with a view to placing a first order for six dozen items, with an option to repeat?"

It was the biggest order Granny Takes a Trip had ever had. I was standing a few paces behind Sylvia, and halfway up the stairs was Judy Scutt. There was a tingle of excitement in the air. The alien waited patiently while Sylvia considered matters. Then, in one of the defining moments of the sixties, she nodded a few times, slowly, *fashionably*.

"We're closed, man," she said, and shut the door.

WHERE Granny's stood, opposite the World's End pub, there is now a café called Entre Nous. I have lost touch with Judy Scutt, but I do know that her son, my friend Paul, became a serious casualty of the sixties. His brains fried by acid, he was working, when I last heard of him, at simple manual jobs: picking up leaves in a park, that sort of thing.

Recently, however, I met a man who claimed not only to know Sylvia but to have gone out with her for years. This was genuinely impressive.

"Did she ever speak to you?" I asked him. "Did she actually *have* anything to say about *anything*?"

"No," he said. "Not a bleeding word." ♦

ANNALS OF RETAIL

THE FORECASTER

Watch the man from Bloomingdale's with the silver sneakers who sits in the front row of the collections. He may determine what you wear next.

BY ZOE HELLER

ON a hot, wet July afternoon at the Grand Hôtel in Paris, the Christian Dior fall couture show has just come to an end, and a great crowd is pouring from the gilded splendor of the Salon Opéra into the lobby, where drinks are being served. Here are the Sphinx-faced lady pundits in black and the tight little phalanx of blonded couture customers in beige. Here are the gum-chewing photographers, wielding their tripods like cattle prods, and the harassed personal assistants, perspiring in their avant-garde sportswear. Here is Mrs. Hirsch, the wife of an Italian businessman, in a diamanté-spangled crinoline—accompanied, as always, by the sombre twelve-year-old Master Leander Hirsch. Here is the elderly Mrs. Johnson, the widow of a former Saks chairman, her black hat trimmed with imitation fruits of the forest and what looks to be a sizable pile of bracken. Here, at last, slowly advancing through the fragrant throng, is Kalman Ruttenstein, senior vice-president for fashion direction at Bloomingdale's.

Even in this Dickensian hugger-mugger, Ruttenstein cuts a striking figure. He is fifty-four years old—a very large man, almost spherical in shape, with a big, handsome head sunned to the color of a well-done French fry. He walks at a ceremonial pace, bearing a battery-operated mini-fan before him like a sceptre; on his feet, peeping out from the bottoms of his navy Donna Karan suit trousers, are a pair of shiny silver running shoes. The note of comic bathos is intended, of course. Just as Ruttenstein's fan is his "signature" accessory, so his silver shoes are understood to be his "signature" footwear.

Occasionally, Ruttenstein pauses to call out to an acquaintance in his rather wistful singsong—"Hi, Susan! Hi, Holly!"—and sometimes this leads to an exchange of kisses, an operation undertaken by Ruttenstein with the solemn concentration of a mafioso. Under normal circumstances, he might stay in the Grand Hôtel lobby and circulate for a bit, but today he is pressed for time. He is due shortly at the House of Chanel, where he is to be granted a rare audience with Karl Lagerfeld. So as soon as he has sought out Gianfranco Ferrè, the Dior designer, to offer the obligatory congratulations on the show ("Beautiful. Really. Fabulous"), he discreetly departs.

Accompanying Ruttenstein on his visit to Chanel is the Bloomingdale's representative in Europe, a Parisienne named Chantal Rousseau. In the car that carries the three of us to the appointment, Ruttenstein, craning around from the front passenger seat, entertains the two of us with a barrage of fashion tips, libellous commentary, and stream-of-consciousness aperçus. "Look, there's Baron Ricky di Portanova. He's got an underwater house in Acapulco. Revolting! . . . Did you see the way —— was smiling beatifically and taking notes at the show? Please! She's never bought a piece of couture in her *life*. . . . Chantal, will you call on the car phone and let them know we're on our way? . . . Hey, you want to see someone looking good? Look at the girl in that car over there. Crisp white shirt, silver hoop earrings: chic and simple. . . . How about ——'s hair? That's gotta be dyed, don't you think? It's not a natural color. . . . You know what? I don't think I'm going to go to the Ted Lapidus show. Ha! Now it'll probably be the hit of the season. . . . Do we have water in the car? I'm always thirsty in Paris—what is it, the salt in the food?" The car draws up on the Rue Cambon, and we all get out. Ruttenstein grows a little nervous. "Am I looking O.K.?" he asks Rousseau. While she straightens his tie, he heaves a sigh. "You know, this business isn't about brain surgery," he says, looking over Rousseau's shoulder. "It's not even about art. It's about clothes."

RUTTENSTEIN arrived at Bloomingdale's to take up his present job seventeen years ago. Department stores had been employing fashion directors for thirty years or more, but people in the fashion world were still not sure what a fashion director did. "It was one of those mysterious things that sounded like fun," Ruttenstein says. For those outside the fashion loop, the title—with its powdery, nineteen-fifties tinge, its suggestion of snap-top handbags and Vreelandish fashion diktat—is still rather mysterious. Ruttenstein sums up his job as "maintaining the fashion image of the store." In addition to overseeing window displays, store promotions, and fashion advertising, his main task, he says, is to monitor the fashion scene, "at all levels, from street to couture," and use whatever he gleans from his research to guide the store's hundred and twenty fashion buyers. He alerts them to new designers and manufacturers; he keeps them up to date on emerging fashion "stories"; and he states the definitive Bloomingdale's position on all fashion issues—from hemlines and color "palettes" to silhouettes, fabrics, and accessories.

Bloomingdale's has fifteen branches in America, from Boston to Florida, and its merchandise ranges from thirty-dollar jumper dresses to eighteen-hundred-dollar Armani jackets. "We have to carry all the looks, but that doesn't mean we just let in tons of junk," Ruttenstein says. "We like to think there is a unifying character to the fashion here—a sense of sophistication and style, something a little more advanced than body coverings. It's my job to see to it that everything that comes into the store has it." Thanks to the Bloomingdale's advertising budget and the considerable influence the store exerts on the buying policies of other New York retailers, Ruttenstein's power is substantial. It is an odd but beguiling thought that what the men and women of New York wear this winter—whether pink capes or leopardskin galoshes or polka-dot chesterfields—will be determined in no small part by the deliberations of one roly-poly man in silver sneakers.

Ruttenstein does not attend the couture shows to place orders—retailers gave up purchasing couture long ago—but the couture trip is serious work nonetheless. "I never go abroad just to look around," he says. "I gotta come back with some firm concepts—I gotta bring home some meat and potatoes." At each show, he sits in the front row, like a salamander frozen on a rock, watching the models with hooded-eyed inscrutability. Very occasionally, he will join in the applause for a particular dress, or scribble something on his card. ("It freaks people out when you do that," he says. "They're thinking, What's he writing?") But he never shares his opinions with his industry colleagues, and only afterward, in the certain privacy of his car, will he offer his précis of the show's significant elements. Sometimes this will be an animated account of several garments, leading to a reflection on the season's general themes. "Midriffs are definitely the erogenous zone of the season. We're seeing a lot of loose hourglass shapes and bustiers. The look is short, which I gotta say is a surprise to me, because I thought mid-knee was an incoming trend. Good news, though, because in my experience short sells better. Mid-knee, let's face it, can be dowdy." Sometimes he will merely mouth a single word: "bows," or "fuchsia," or "girdles."

Back home, Ruttenstein disseminates his wisdom in various ways. At least once a week, he will take a grand tour of the fashion departments—chatting with the sales assistants, fretting over displays, inquiring after the fortunes of his favorite merchandise, sometimes even counting dresses on racks to find out how many have been sold. Earlier this year, when the store's fashion buyers and coördinators were moved to a swank office building on Third Avenue, Ruttenstein refused to go. His home at Bloomingdale's remains a slightly tatty couple of rooms littered with ancient display props in a little warren of offices midway between the store's second and third floors. "I *can't* leave," he says. "I need to be in the store. You can have all the computers in the world, but I regard the salespeople as my computers. I can cover four floors in half an hour, and when I see it I remember it better than a bunch of figures on a computer screen." In addition to taking his weekly walking tours, Ruttenstein talks to the Bloomingdale's merchandise managers every day. He sends out in-house fashion communiqués throughout the year, and recently he has been experimenting with videos for the sales personnel, in which he appears, heralded by synthesizers, intoning gravely about the season's fashion themes. His most important media, however, are the "scripts," or dossiers, that he prepares four times a year to coincide with the Bloomingdale's fashion buyers' summits held in Milan and Paris at the time of the men's and women's ready-to-wear collections.

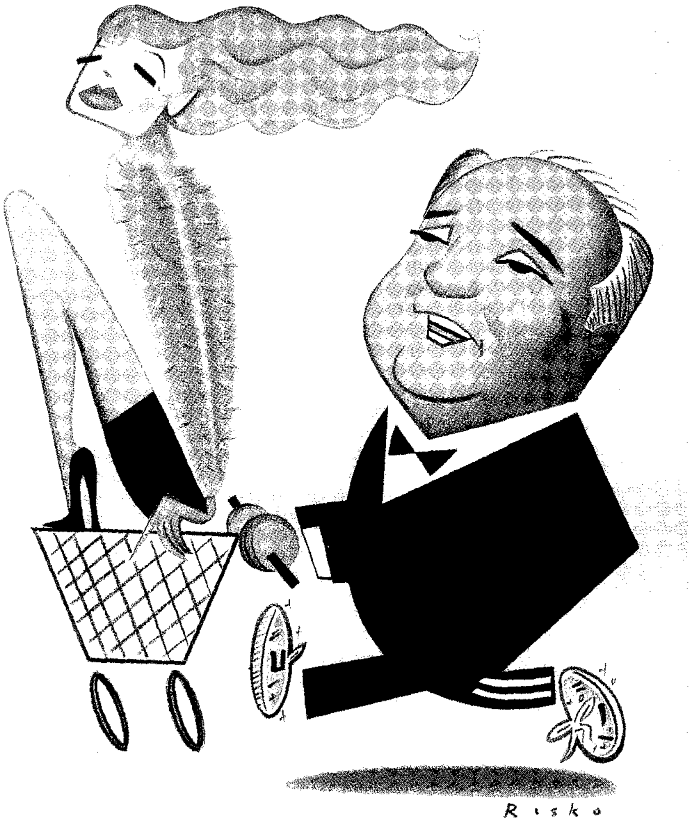
The prose style of these scripts tends toward a faux profundity: "If white comes in many hues, it's because there are many shades of truth" and "This will be the season when we are ready to relax with the millennium"—that sort of thing. The script last March, addressing the fashion themes for the fall of '94, was entitled "Tomorrow" and began with a quotation from Graham Greene: "There is always one moment . . . when the door opens and lets the future in."

"Our quotes never mean anything," Ruttenstein says cheerfully. "I just like them. They're pompous-sounding, and they make people pay attention. Years ago, we had a quote that said something like 'Anybody who is very good is very different.' We attributed it to Justice Felix Frankfurter, of the Supreme Court. He never said it—we just made it up, and used it many years in a row. It's a great quote, but, I mean, what does it mean?"

Along with a fair amount of such fashion guff, the scripts provide straightforward predictions: lists of fabrics and pages of palettes that will be "pivotal" the following season, sketches of shapes that will be "ubiquitous," lists of garments that will be "must-haves." This is where Ruttenstein's worth is really tested. On the basis of his good feeling about, say, transparent blouses, large sums will be invested in transparent blouses, bought "in depth." If his augury proves correct and transparent blouses do prove to be "pivotal," then all is well. If, on the other hand, they turn out to be sartorial will-o'-the-wisps, it is Ruttenstein who will be blamed for the forlorn racks of marked-down merchandise at the end of the season. For the most part, his long track record of accurate forecasting insures that what he says goes. "If Kal says, 'I believe in fur trim,' we will buy aggressively into fur trim," Brenda Moser, one of the store's divisional merchandise managers, says. "Kal's advice is right so often you'd be crazy to buck it." Nonetheless, intramural spats do arise. "Oh, I disagree with the buyers every *day*," Ruttenstein says. "They'll say they never sell sleeveless—because some of them have fat arms and *they* can't wear sleeveless. They're always buying too much black. Then, I have one buyer who is always buying purple, because *she* happens to love purple."

Very often, the disagreements have to do with objections by the buyers to the "fashion-forward," or adventurous, merchandise that Ruttenstein favors. "Kal has always had his finger on the pulse, especially as far as the young-contemporary customer is concerned," says Ellin Saltzman, who left Bergdorf Goodman this summer, after two years as the store's fashion director. "He's probably the most distinguished fashion director around, for that reason. The few times I ever managed to beat Kal on something—pick up on it before he did—I was sort of surprised." But being the first does not always mean selling the most. The cautious buyers tend to worry that what they gain in fashion élan from Ruttenstein's more recondite suggestions they will ose in turnover. "You don't want to be oo far ahead of the parade, or there will be no parade," Frank Doroff, the general merchandise manager for the store, s fond of reminding Ruttenstein. "And my reply," Ruttenstein says, "is always 'If you're not the lead dog, the view never changes.' I gave him a pillow with hat on it last Christmas."

There have been occasions, Ruttentein is bound to admit, when he has entured too far *avant* the Bloomingdale's *garde*. There were last winter's bell-bottom slacks, which did well at first with a younger crowd and then "died" in April, leaving Ruttenstein swimming in unwanted flares. This spring, there were the dozen "athletic-style" ball skirts made exclusively for the store. Ruttenstein, who has taken to wearing Adidas training pants with a tuxedo jacket on formal occasions, thought a five-hundred-dollar black satin skirt with three white stripes down either side would be "extremely chic and funny." He pictured it being worn "in the Hamptons this summer, by some beautiful blonde with tennis sneakers." Almost no one else did, alas, and all but two of the skirts had to be marked down. Such failures are inevitable, Ruttenstein says. "If I weren't wrong occasionally, I wouldn't be on the cutting edge. I'd be in a dull place."



"My job in the eighties was much more just looking around. In the nineties, I gotta make it happen."

THE meeting with Karl Lagerfeld on the Rue Cambon takes place rather later than arranged. As we enter the building, we bump into John Fairchild, the editorial director of *Women's Wear Daily*, who has also come to see Lagerfeld. He doesn't have an appointment—he has just dropped in. But the unwritten rules of the fashion hierarchy dictate that Fairchild takes precedence. It is he who is seen first, while Ruttenstein stands about in an airless corridor drinking a can of diet Coke. From time to time, a nymphlike assistant hurries past us into Lagerfeld's studio, and for the moment that the door is open we catch the buzz of voices within. "I think I just heard Karl," Ruttenstein says, in a half whisper, on one of these occasions. "Chantal, wasn't that Karl's voice?"

Today's visit is a matter of courtesy more than of business. Part of Ruttenstein's unofficial brief is to nurture the store's relationships with its most important designers. "You gotta be constantly taking their temperature," he says. "You want to keep your important venders happy." Sometimes he may use an occasion of this kind to request a personal store appearance, or an "exclusive"—an item from a designer's couture collection, made for Bloomingdale's in a less expensive fabric. Sometimes his mission is to smooth ruffled feathers—to explain why, for example, a designer hasn't been given as big a boutique within the store as he or she would like. And sometimes he is bearing gifts. Present-giving is big in the fashion world. The transatlantic flow of ambassadorial tchotchkes never ceases. Only a few months ago, during the menswear shows in Milan, Ruttenstein went to Armani's sixtieth-birthday celebrations toting a crystal monkey from the Bloomingdale's chairman, Michael Gould. ("It was supposed to be the animal that represents the year he was born," Ruttenstein said when asked what inspired this interesting gift idea. "We later found out that someone had messed up and it should have been a dog. But we decided to go with the monkey anyway.") In Lagerfeld's case, Ruttenstein has come simply to pay his respects and get a preview of tomorrow's collection. "Those *really* close to Karl get invited to watch a fitting," he says. "Oh, I'd *love* to attend a fitting."

We wait and wait for Lagerfeld. Half an hour goes by. Eventually, we are moved down the hallway and into a little office that is being used as a temporary storeroom for the hats and boas in tomorrow's show. Ruttenstein, who has accepted without question John Fairchild's superior claim on Lagerfeld's attention, keeps up a merry flow of chat. He talks about the shortcomings of French water ("You can't get clean here. I don't know what it is, but by the end of the week my hair is always like this *helmet*") and about the inadequacies of French service (the French don't really understand about air-conditioning, he says, and anyway, even when he brings his own pillow with him he never sleeps as well in a foreign hotel bed as he does back in his Manhattan apartment, with the sound of garbage trucks rumbling cozily along Second Avenue).

At last, Ruttenstein's moment comes. We are shown into the studio and find Lagerfeld sitting at his desk, facing a board of sketched designs and issuing brisk orders to his minions. One of them—a blond woman—is wearing a T-shirt with "Virgin" printed on the front and "Whore" on the back. Ruttenstein is enchanted by the garment. "*Great* T-shirt!" he says. "*Love* it!" John Fairchild, who is about to depart, barks with mirth when he sees Ruttenstein. "Now, what are *you* doing here, Kal? Not getting into trouble? You aren't here to *copy*, are you?" Ruttenstein laughs weakly and quickly changes the subject: "You're looking beautiful, as usual, Mr. Fairchild. That's a beautiful tie." But the gibe evidently agitates him, and long after Fairchild has left he seems a little distracted. He and Lagerfeld discuss business matters; they look at some sketches, and the designer even allows Ruttenstein to examine one of his new corselets. Ruttenstein richly enjoys all this. "Oh, Karl," he keeps sighing. "That's *fabulous*." When we get outside, though, his first words are "Did you *hear* what Mr. Fairchild said?"

Fairchild has touched, as he surely meant to, a very sore spot. In Paris this week, a long-simmering contretemps about copies of Versace designs sold at Bloomingdale's has finally exploded. In Milan last month, Ruttenstein was told he wasn't welcome at Versace's menswear show, and here he has been banned again, from the Versace couture. It is too much. He is already in trouble with Donna Karan, who publicly upbraided him at one of her collections recently for allowing Bloomingdale's to carry a copy of one of her dresses. (Ruttenstein says that there were at least five versions of the dress available from five different manufacturers and designers, and that it was impossible to ascertain which designer was the source of inspiration. He tried to patch things up with Karan by sending her a pair of silver sneakers, together with a note saying, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," but the *froideur* has lingered.) The new row with Versace has made his mortification complete. In thirty-four years in the fashion business, he has never before been excluded from a show. It is a social nightmare, a professional crisis. Apart from anything else, it is frustrating. "Hmm, no one seems to be talking about it," he says sniffily of the Versace show the day after it has taken place. "*I* certainly haven't heard anything." A moment later, he asks quietly, "Did *you* hear anything?"

The dispute began last year when

NARCISSISM

Narcissus pined away, staring into his pool, but what was he wearing? If you've got some great clothes and the right jewelry and makeup, the moment can come when the adored object in the mirror whispers back that this is forever. Vicomtesse Jacqueline de Ribes and Raymundo de Larrain await the message.

Photographed by Richard Avedon, New York City, 1961.

"There's the look. You know the look. There it is. That look."

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Versace visited Bloomingdale's to sign copies of his fashion book, "South Beach Stories." According to Versace, copies of his Miami-inspired designs were on display in the store; when his representatives pointed this out, they received clear promises that such flagrant theft of his ideas would not happen again. (Ruttenstein denies that such promises were made.) "But it did happen again!" Versace told me in a telephone call from Florida. "With a vinyl dress. They are saying they launched the vinyl. This is stupid! This is vulgar! It is always a compliment when people copy, but it has to be done at the right time. My reputation and my work are fragile. I make my living with this work. I want to be respected."

Ruttenstein admits that there were "versions" of Versace's designs being sold at Bloomingdale's when Versace came to visit. For a while after this episode, he says, he went out of his way to avoid upsetting the designer. "When everyone was carrying copies of Versace's safety-pin dress, I made sure we didn't carry it, even though the sales were terrific. Then we did a vinyl dress, it's true—but, what, Gianni thinks he discovered vinyl? Vinyl was everywhere! Some things are in the public domain."

Concerning the larger issue of copying, Ruttenstein is unrepentant. Versace's claim that retailers "go to couture to rip things off" is in some measure correct. "Have I ever gone to a show, seen a dress, and said, 'Gee, that looks great—let's do something like it in a cheaper fabric'?" Ruttenstein asks. "Yes! I stand guilty!" (Indeed, while we are in Paris he takes a fancy to a wool jersey minidress with a wide belt at the Yves Saint Laurent show and talks enthusiastically of the cheap adaptation he plans to have in Bloomingdale's by Christmas.) If this is a dishonorable practice, he says, then it is a dishonor committed by all the major retailers. "When you see all the store presidents sitting in the front row at the shows, do you think they're here to admire the wonderful creativity of the designers?" he says. "They're here to get ideas! There's nothing illegal or immoral about it. In the past, there was this unwritten rule that you could copy the next season. But things are getting quicker now. The shows are on TV every night in France and Italy. The photographers sell their photographs to manufacturers. A manufacturer like A.B.S USA can turn things around two weeks after a collection. And you gotta be loyal to your customers—give them the best fashion, as quick as you can."

This does seem to be the consensus among retailers. Joan Kaner, the fashion director at Neiman Marcus, agrees that the copying etiquette that once applied is no longer sustainable. "As an honorable retailer, I don't want to knock off a designer within the season, but if I go to a resource that is selling copies and all my competitors have access to that resource, too, I can't really ignore it." Versace's accusation that big stores are placing designer businesses at risk by patronizing the knockoff merchants is stoutly denied by Ellin Saltzman. "Someone who wants to buy the Versace will buy the Versace," she says. "The person who wants something *instant* will buy the forty-nine-ninety-five copy. A two-thousand-dollar dress, if it's a young style, *should* be available at forty-nine ninety-five."

Even some of the designers speak of being resigned to the situation. "Look, once you do it, it's out there," Calvin Klein says. "That's the way this business works. I don't consider copying a serious threat. The woman who wants my clothes wants my clothes—she doesn't want copies. If twenty manufacturers on Seventh Avenue are copying me, thank God. When they *stop* copying, then I really have trouble."

Ruttenstein's boss, Michael Gould, is so angry about the humiliation visited upon his fashion director that he is threatening to cut off all business relations with Versace. "Really, though, I just want to kind of play it down," Ruttenstein says. He mops his forehead wearily. "Gianni is being very Sicilian about this, but I'm hoping it's all going to blow over."

HOWEVER trying the fashion world can be, Ruttenstein never seriously questions its mores, or his own place within it. Sometimes he affects a sort of despair over the tantrumlets that designers throw. But, in truth, he would as soon miss the Paris couture shows as address John Fairchild by his first name. "Kal will never, ever give up his European trips," his assistant, Kim Koshiol, an associate fashion director at Bloomingdale's, says. "He is too curious. Even after all these years in the business, he is always thrilled to see something new."

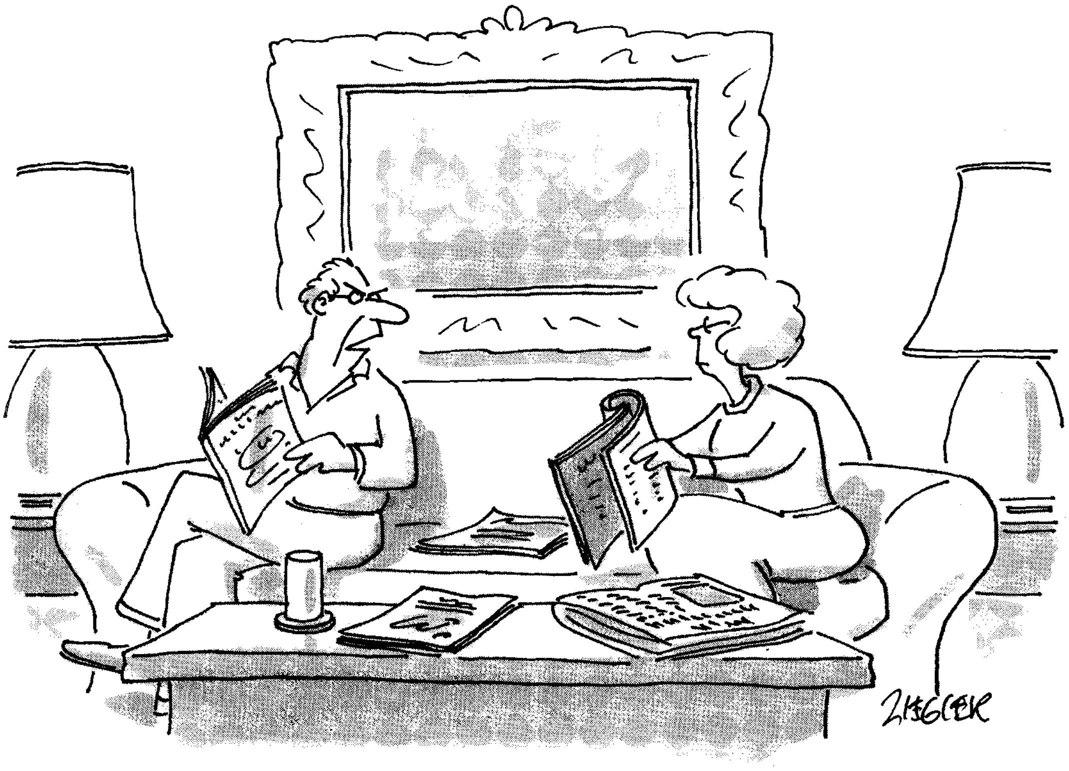
Ruttenstein's colleagues and competitors agree that his bottomless appetite for novelty is his great professional advantage. In Paris, at the end of a long, exhausting day, when all around him are flagging, Ruttenstein will still be interrogating locals, in his schoolboy French, on the provenance of their accessories, or veering off into little boutiques to jiggle gently to techno music while he riffles through piles of minidresses. "Hmm," he'll say, swivelling in the street to examine a retreating figure. "She's wearing gold sneakers. You know, I'm thinking of talking to the shoe buyer about doing something in gold. Not gold gold, but a kind of yellowy gold—a hip, street gold." One evening, as we are wandering down the Place Vendôme, he suddenly halts. "Look!" he cries out in delight, pointing across the street. "That boy is wearing blue and orange—Howard Johnson colors!"

Ruttenstein grew up in Buffalo. His father, an accountant, and his mother owned a part interest in three small dress stores and, eventually, a whole interest in ust one. As a boy, Ruttenstein helped out at the store after school—dressing mannequins, ticketing merchandise, carrying boxes to and from the stockroom. On more than one occasion, he was allowed to devise he store's window display.

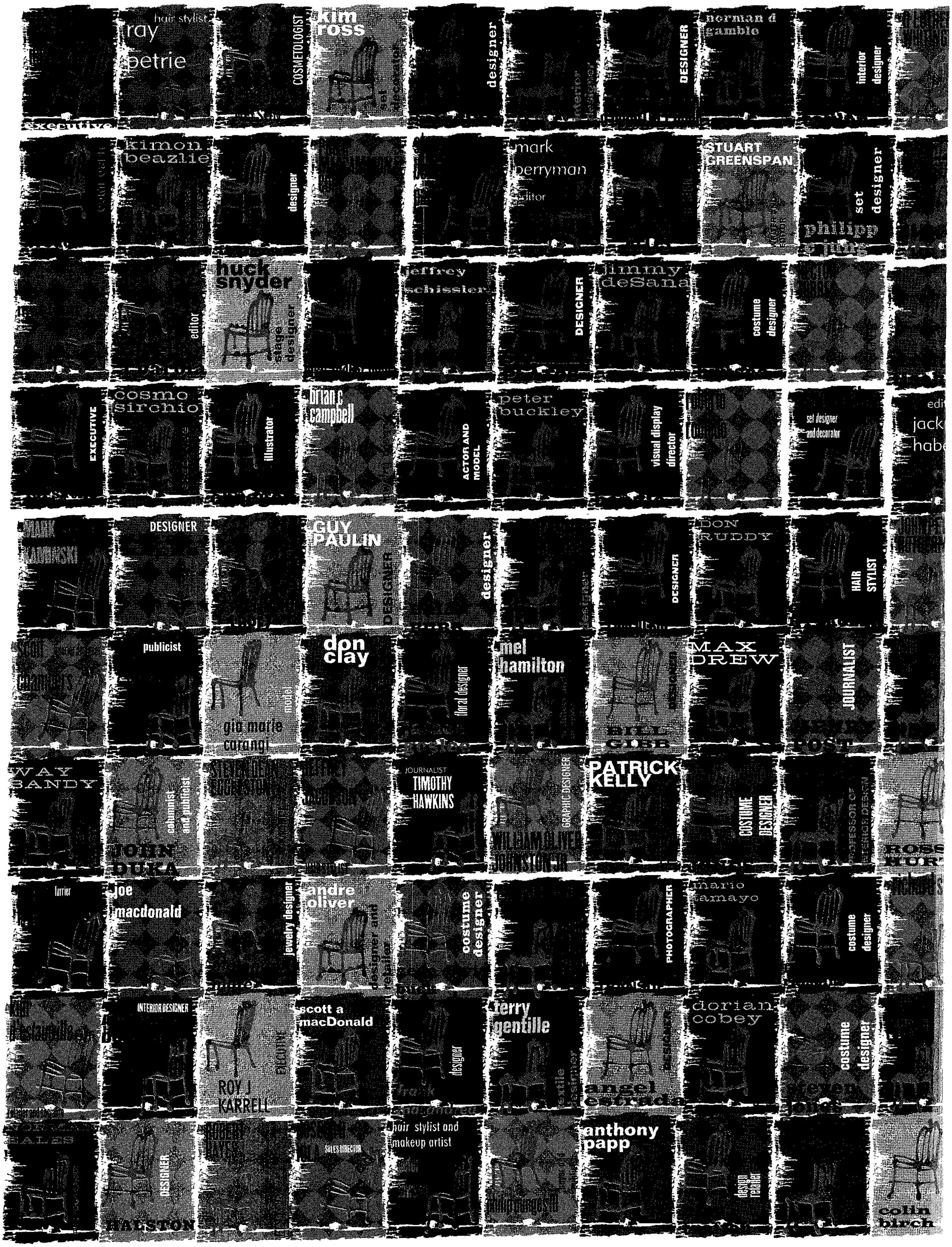
But his real enthusiasm, even then, was for he *business* of fashion. As a treat, his parents would allow him to accompany them on buying trips to Manhattan's Seventh Avenue. Ruttenstein, an avid adolescent reader of *Gentlemen's Quarterly* and *Vogue*, would help them choose the stock, and, back in Buffalo, he would monitor its progress with great excitement. "I loved to hear the cash register ring—don't ask me why," he recalls. "It was always 'Are we beating yesterday?' The store had a book called the 'Beat Yesterday' book, so if it was Tuesday, December 18th, it was measured against Monday, December 18th, the year before. If we went ahead of last year's figures, I was always very happy. I liked to see a lot of something sell. If there was a dress that we sold eight of on the day that we received twenty-four, I was telling my father or mother, 'We gotta reorder this thing!' "

Ruttenstein attended Princeton, where he majored in English, and then went on to Columbia, where he took an M.B.A. (He enjoys the look of surprise on people's faces when they discover these academic qualifications. "Mostly, I keep quiet about the M.B.A.," he says. "I figure it's not good for a fashion director's image if he seems too smart.") In the fall of 1960, after six months in the Army, Ruttenstein entered the training program at Lord & Taylor, starting out as a service manager on the selling floor and eventually graduating to the women's division of the buying office. Back then, Lord & Taylor still offered "Parisiennes"—authorized copies of Paris couture priced at a hundred dollars or less. The store paid the couturiers a "caution," for the right to reproduce garments in less expensive American fabrics. As a women's-suit buyer, Ruttenstein scored his great triumph when he brought the first Yves Saint Laurent pants suit to America. "Kal did a very courageous and smart thing," Bernadine Morris, the former fashion correspondent for the *Times*, recalls. "He took these Yves Saint Laurent copies and sold them as separates. This was *unheard of*." Ruttenstein says, "My Parisiennes were always the best."

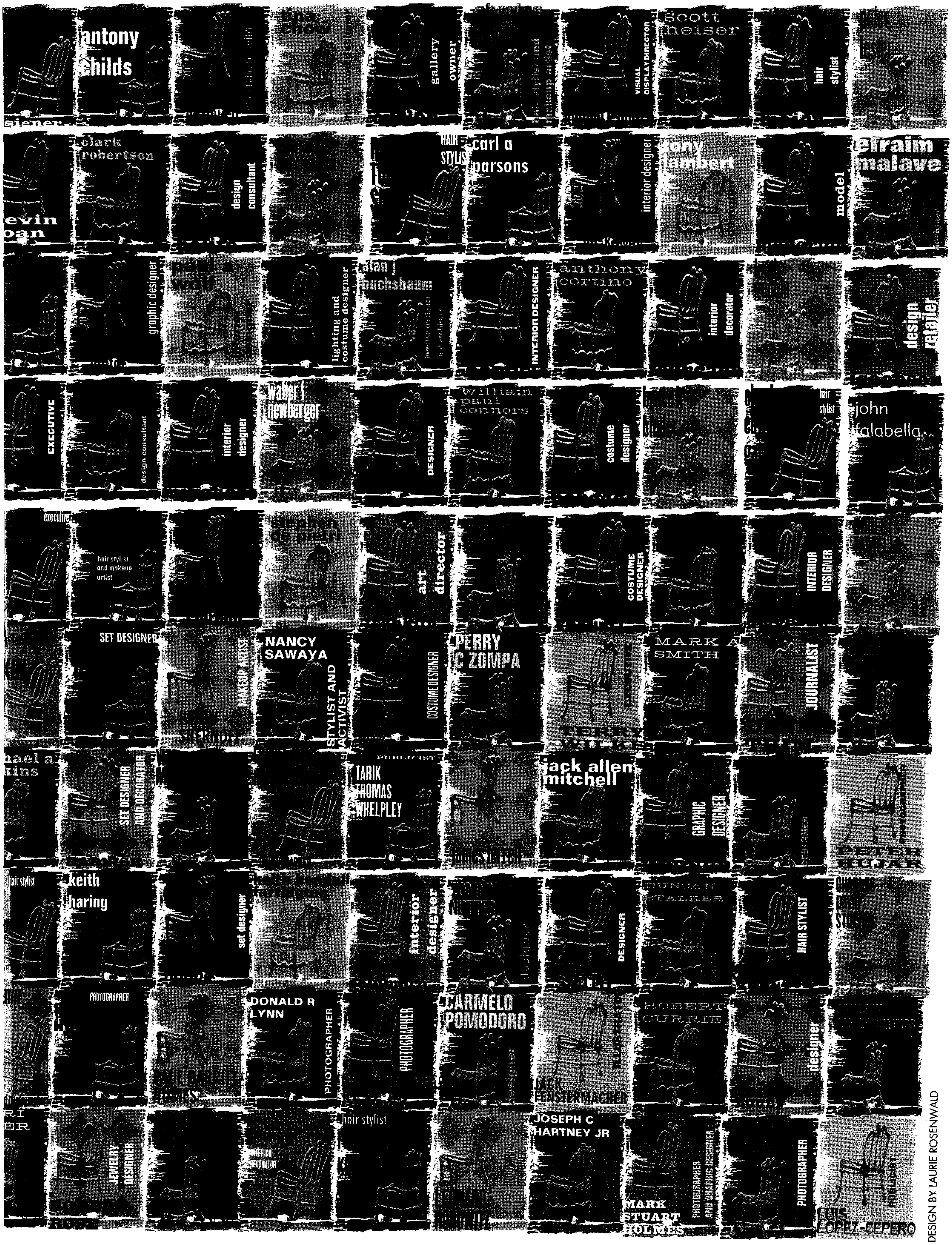
It was around this time that Marvin Traub, then the executive vice-president of Bloomingdale's, tried to hire Ruttenstein. "I had heard he was the best women's-suit buyer in the country," Traub says. But Ruttenstein stayed at Lord & Taylor and was moved into the dress department (where, in his first year, he added a million dollars to volume); in 1970, he was made merchandise manager for shoes and juniors. In 1972, after twelve years at the store,



"What's the big deal? When I was in the war, damn near everybody wore khakis!"


executive
hair stylist
ray petrie
COSMETOLOGIST
kim ross
set decorator
designer
interior designer
DESIGNER
norman d gamble
interior designer
kimon beazlie
designer
mark perryman
editor
STUART GREENSPAN
set designer
huck snyder
stage designer
editor
jeffrey schissler
DESIGNER
jimmy deSana
costume designer
EXECUTIVE
cosmo sirchio
illustrator
brian c campbell
ACTOR AND MODEL
peter buckley
visual display director
set designer and decorator
jack
MARK KAMINSKI
DESIGNER
GUY PAULIN
DESIGNER
designer
DESIGNER
DON RUDDY
HAIR STYLIST
publicist
model
gia marie carangi
don clay
floral designer
mel hamilton
BILL GIBB
MAX DREW
JOURNALIST
WAY BANDY
columnist and publicist
JOHN DUKA
JOURNALIST
TIMOTHY HAWKINS
GRAPHIC DESIGNER
WILLIAM OLIVER JOHNSTON JR
PATRICK KELLY
COSTUME DESIGNER
furrier
joe macdonald
jewelry designer
andre oliver
designer and retailer
costume designer
PHOTOGRAPHER
mario tamayo
costume designer
INTERIOR DESIGNER
ROY J KARRELL
EXECUTIVE
scott a macDonald
designer
terry gentille
DESIGNER
angel estrada
dorian cobey
costume designer
DESIGNER
HALSTON
ROBERT HAYES
SALES DIRECTOR
hair stylist and makeup artist
anthony papp
design retailer
colin birch

IN MEMORIAM: *These are the names and occupations of people in or associated with the fashion industry who have died*


antony childs
tina chow
gallery owner
visual display director
scott heiser
hair stylist
clark robertson
design consultant
hair stylist
carl a parsons
interior designer
tony lambert
model
efraim malave
graphic designer
paul a wolf
lighting and costume designer
alan j buchsbaum
INTERIOR DESIGNER
anthony cortino
interior decorator
design retailer
EXECUTIVE
design consultant
interior designer
walter l newberger
DESIGNER
william paul connors
costume designer
john falabella
executive
hair stylist and makeup artist
stephen de pietri
art director
COSTUME DESIGNER
INTERIOR DESIGNER
SET DESIGNER
MAKEUP ARTIST
NANCY SAWAYA
STYLIST AND ACTIVIST
COSTUME DESIGNER
PERRY C ZOMPA
EXECUTIVE
TERRY
MARK A SMITH
JOURNALIST
SET DESIGNER AND DECORATOR
PUBLICIST
TARIK THOMAS WHELPLEY
james harrell
jack allen mitchell
GRAPHIC DESIGNER
PHOTOGRAPHER
PETER HUJAR
hair stylist
keith haring
set designer
interior designer
DESIGNER
DUNCAN TALKER
HAIR STYLIST
PHOTOGRAPHER
PAUL BARRITT
DONALD R LYNN
PHOTOGRAPHER
PHOTOGRAPHER
CARMELO POMODORO
designer
JACK FENSTERMACHER
ROBERT CURRIE
designer
JEWELRY DESIGNER
INTERIOR DECORATOR
hair stylist
JOSEPH C HARTNEY JR
MARK STUART HOLMES
PHOTOGRAPHER AND GRAPHIC DESIGNER
PHOTOGRAPHER
PUBLICIST
LUIS LOPEZ-CEPERO

DESIGN BY LAURIE ROSENWALD

ds from the sale of this art work and of other art in this issue will be donated to Gay Men's Health Crisis. (See page 6 for details.)

JUST HOW DO YOU SUPPOSE THAT ALICE KNOWS?

Just how do you suppose that Alice knows
So much about what's au courant in clothes?
You wouldn't really think that she's the sort
To know much more than whether skirts are short
Or long again, or somewhere in between.
She's surely not the sort who would be seen
In front-row seats at Paris fashion shows.
In fact, she looks at that sort down her nose.
For her to read a fashion mag would seem
As out of synch as reading *Field & Stream.*
Biographies are what she reads instead.
And yet she has, in detail, in her head
Whose indigos are drawing "ooh"s and "oh"s.
Just how do you suppose that Alice knows?

We're leaving, and I'll ask her, once we've gone,
"What *was* that thing that whatzername had on?
It lacked a back. The front was sort of lined
With gauzy stuff. It seemed to be the kind
Of frock that might be worn by Uncle Meyer
If he played Blanche in 'Streetcar Named Desire.' "
And Alice knows. She knows just who designed
The rag and why some folks are of a mind
To buy this *schmattameister's* frilly things
For what a small Brancusi usually brings.
She mentions something newly chic this year.
To me it looked like antique fishing gear.
I'm stunned, as if she'd talked in Urdu prose.
Just how do you suppose that Alice knows?

She gets no E-mail info on design.
(She's au courant but, so far, not on-line.)
No fashion maven tells her what is kitsch.
She goes to no symposium at which
She learns why some designer's models pose
As Navajos or folks from U.F.O.s.
I know that women have no special gene
Providing knowledge of the fashion scene,
The way that men all have, without a doubt,
The chromosome for garbage-taking-out.
And yet she's fashion-conscious to her toes.
Does she divine these things? Does she osmose
What's in the air concerning hose and bows?
Just how do you suppose that Alice knows?

—Calvin Trillin

he accepted a job as one of five vice-presidents at Saks, with responsibility for the junior and contemporary floors. It was at Saks that he pulled off his amazing Saint-Tropez tie-dye coup.

"I was on vacation in Saint-Tropez—this was in the days when Saint-Tropez was happening—and everybody in the harbor was wearing these lightweight tie-dyed cotton chino jeans and tops and jackets and shorts. They were peach or light blue or a sort of tannish color. Now, when you see eighty thousand people wandering through a port wearing the same look, you know it's a look that people want. So when I went on to the Olympia fashion fair, in London, I found this jeans maker who had also been in Saint-Tropez, and he had got the whole look. I took his entire production. It was fifty-two hundred pairs of jeans, fifty-two hundred shirts, fifty-two hundred jackets. Everything was fifty-two hundred. I bought it all. Very, very stupid. If it had been a bomb, I would have looked like the biggest jerk in the world."

Happily, the customers at Saks' branches across America went wild for peach, blue, and tan tie-dye. "We were in Italy on a sweater trip when the goods hit in New York," Ruttenstein recalls, "and we got a telex saying it was a sellout. That one little buy made my reputation at Saks. The president, Norman Wechsler, always used to say to people, 'Why don't you do it the way Kal does it?' I seemed to be able to do no wrong there. Those were some of the best years of my life."

Ruttenstein left Saks in 1975 to take a job as president of Bonwit Teller. After two years, the store's ownership changed, and he began to have disagreements with the management. He decided to leave, and the day after his departure Marvin Traub, then president of Bloomingdale's (and soon to be its chairman), who had been tracking his progress since the Lord & Taylor days, snagged him for Bloomingdale's. He went to the store just as Traub's vision of "the store as theatre" was approaching its zenith. Those were the days of sumptuous window displays, of buying trips to India and China, of "country promotions," for which the store would recreate rooms in the style of Spanish haciendas or French town houses. Traub was prepared to invest in young unproved designers, and he charged his fashion director with the task of bringing fun and glamour to the fashion departments. In the eighties, Bloomingdale's introduced a new generation of European and American fashion designers—best-sellers like Giorgio Armani Karl Lagerfeld, and Donna Karan, and also more outré labels, like Jean Pau Gaultier, Thierry Mugler, Romeo Gigli Issey Miyake, and Claude Montana.

During that decade, the twice-yearl buyers' meetings in Paris were profligate affairs. Ruttenstein was "encour aged to be lavish," he says, and his script presentations, incorporating music and models and humorous props, became more elaborate every year. Once, when the meeting was held in the ballroom of the Inter-Continental Paris, Ruttenstein hired a replica of the "Winged Victory of Samothrace" from the Louvre and placed it directly behind Marvin Traub's seat at the conference table. "We bathed the statue in blue light, and some of it caught Mr. Traub's white hair," he recalls. "It made him look very dramatic, not to mention a little frightening. He loved it."

Things have changed since then. Excess debt incurred by the store's then parent company, the Campeau Corporation, led, in 1990, to Bloomingdale's declaring Chapter Eleven. The following year, Marvin Traub left to make way for Michael Gould, and the new chairman brought with him a new policy of rigorous attention to the bottom line. Gould's hardboiled approach has helped steer the store back to financial health, but it has also done away with much of the fun and games that once made the store famous. "There is a difference between an entertaining experience and a circus," Michael Gould says. "When you walk into Bloomingdale's, I want you to feel you're walking into my home." Gone are the exotic promotions, the fancy installations. Gone is the profusion of recherché designer abels. The customer base for designer merchandise is shrinking relative to that of cheaper fashion merchandise, and the tore has responded by dumping all but he most successful designer lines.

"Maybe we've lost a little of our pecialness," Ruttenstein concedes. "But people now want to get into a store, make their purchase, get out, and get on with it."

Indeed, the nineties have seen a general shift of allegiance, particularly among younger customers, away rom department stores to specialty tores and discount chains. Department tores have tended to respond in two ways. Either they accept the fact that the average age of their customer is increasing, and begin catering to an older consumer by emphasizing attentive, efficient service, or they take up the challenge of the discount and specialty stores by becoming more price-competitive. Bloomingdale's seems to have hedged its bets. Michael Gould has conducted an internal campaign to improve the look of the store and the standard of customer service. But the store has also switched its emphasis from high-priced designer merchandise to "bridge" and "contemporary" wear. This trend is underlined by the merger that will take place in December of the parent company, Federated Department Stores, with R. H. Macy & Company—a merger that will achieve economies of scale similar to those enjoyed by retail conglomerates like J. C. Penney and Sears, Roebuck.

Naturally, these changes have affected the nature of Ruttenstein's work. "My job in the eighties was much more just looking around," he says. "In the nineties, I gotta make it *happen*." Although he still tries to nurture younger, unestablished designers, that is a far trickier business now than it once was. "Ten years ago, there were a lot of loss leaders that we didn't have a prayer of selling, but we would carry them because they were highly editorialized. Mr. Gould is not one for stocking loss leaders. He wants everything to sell."

Ruttenstein is not as vexed by these requirements as one might expect. He is attached to the language of vertiginously high fashion, but, as he points out one day in Paris, while we are driving to the Sentier, the city's cash-and-carry fashion district, "I also get a big kick from giving the customers good-value clothes—you know, a lot of fashion for the buck."

"Wait, I'll go down with you. I'm just changing back into my rubber-soled actionwear."

• •

"YOU'LL go crazy when you see the Versace copies we've got upstairs," the woman in Ruttenstein's favorite Sentier showroom tells him when he walks in. His face falls. "*Je ne veux pas parler de Versace aujourd'hui*," he says icily. Upstairs, he gazes greedily around the room. "Hmm," he says, his eyes alighting on some plaid mohair vests. "Now, is this a mohair that could mean something to me? Yes. Would that make a cute window? Yes. Ah, but a little mohair goes a long way in terms of sales. The buyers would kill me if I bought more."

Once he gets started on the proper business of buying, he operates very rapidly. Chantal Rousseau and the store assistant rush to and fro bringing him clothes as he sits, spilling off the sides of a tiny chair and passing instant judgments.

"Yes, take it. I like 'em," he says of some mini-kilts in gray wool. "Oh, yes! Pinafores—good. Take 'em. Lemme see the buttons on those jumpers—ooh, no. But I'm kind of interested in the satin shirts—put 'em to one side." He turns to me. "See what I'm doing? I'm building a story—a tight group that goes together."

Actually, I don't see. Some things are chosen because they are "fun." Others are pronounced "tacky" and firmly dismissed. A selection of stretch lace T-shirts produces a moue of disgust. And as for the Versace copies that the assistant spoke of—a range of furry animal-print miniskirts—Ruttenstein's scorn is regal. ("Huh," he says. "If she thinks I would like *them*, then how little she knows me.")

But why he finally plumps for thirty-six diaphanous black blouses with a swirly flock pattern, or two hundred and fifty long-sleeved white T-shirts, remains a mystery. How does he fix upon the number he will order? "Oh, gut, like history," he says, distracted by a pair of black smoking pants that Rousseau is displaying for him. In just under an hour, he has ordered sixty thousand dollars' worth of clothes. "I don't think a lot of fashion directors would soil their hands with this kind of project," he says as we depart. "But I love to do it. I love getting the stuff in and watching it sell."

TOWARD the end of the Paris trip, Ruttenstein has lunch at the Ritz. His companions on this occasion are the senior Chanel salesman at Bloomingdale's, a modish young man named Oscar Falcon, and Mrs. Leslye Kohl, a handsome woman in her middle years whom Ruttenstein identifies in an aside as "one of the store's best Chanel customers." (Mrs. Kohl, a New Yorker, buys so much Chanel, so regularly, that she has become firm friends with Oscar, and when she decided to take a brief holiday in Paris she brought him along with her.)

The bar at the Ritz is filled with famous people, and Ruttenstein keeps breaking into Mrs. Kohl's account of her sightseeing program to point them out. "There's Christy Turlington. Oh! I hope she's not going to eat a big lunch right before a show. Ah, see, no, she's just having a coffee. Look at Joan Collins! Isn't she short! All those women with great faces were short, you know. They just *projected* tall."

Mrs. Kohl has just started telling us about her newly renovated kitchen in Manhattan when suddenly Gianni Versace appears behind Ruttenstein's chair and puts his hands on his shoulders. Ruttenstein swivels round and utters a strangled cry: "Gianni!"

"Kal."

Ruttenstein gets up, and Versace kisses him on both cheeks. "I'm going to New York tomorrow," Versace says. "Give me a call."

"But I won't be there!" Ruttenstein wails. "I'll still be in Paris!"

"Well, I'm leaving for Miami on Thursday, because my house is ready now."

"Yes. I saw it the other day when I was in Miami. It's looking fabulous, Gianni."

"Next time you pass, you must drop in. Just ring the doorbell."

"Well, thank you, Gianni."

"My pleasure, Kal. I'll see you."

Versace walks away, and all the fashion people at the surrounding tables, who have been rapt throughout this encounter, hastily resume their meals. Ruttenstein sits down very slowly, dabbing his forehead with his handkerchief. His eyes have grown absolutely round. "Hello?" he says. "Excuse me? I mean, hello? Can you believe that? I am stunned. I am baffled. I mean, I guess it's over. Wouldn't you say?"

In the days that follow, Ruttenstein's account of this meeting with Versace grows increasingly baroque: "And then he said, 'I love you, I miss you. Never, *ever* walk by my house again without ringing the bell!' Didn't he? Zoe was there. She saw it all." But the details are not important. The point is that Versace's pique has been spent and Ruttenstein has been publicly forgiven. He can return to New York with a light heart.

BACK in Manhattan, the fashion cycle continues. Ruttenstein's Sentier shipments arrive late. The clothes are put on display in the Y.E.S. department and are reported to be selling well. Ruttenstein arranges a disco party for the launching of a new DKNY boutique in the store, and talks to Donna Karan on the phone. She, too, has apparently forgiven him his trespasses, and the conversation is warm. A wool jersey minidress remarkably similar to the one that Ruttenstein admired in Yves Saint Laurent's couture collection appears in a Bloomingdale's advertisement in the *Times*, flagged as "The Next Great Thing." The cruise collections are shown in New York, and Ruttenstein goes for a private preview with Calvin Klein.

The meeting begins with a picnic lunch of chicken and salad in Klein's office. Ruttenstein sits with a napkin tucked into his collar, while Klein, legs

SUNNY FACE

For several decades in the middle of this century, there were no sunnier, funnier faces than those of Fred Astaire and Audrey Hepburn. Comfortable in their own skin, they seemed supremely comfortable in clothes, and made being beautiful in clothes look so easy that they became icons of style—our ideal. Their romance in the airy fashion-world sendup "Funny Face" was May-December, but their thirty-year age difference doesn't jar: his boyish manliness and her girlish womanliness made them twin sprites, ageless soulmates. Here, wearing Astaire's trenchcoat and fedora, Hepburn was as much herself as she was in a Givenchy gown. Watching her in the dark in 1957, flawlessly glamorous as either a bohemian bluestocking or a world-famous model, moviegoers might have been thinking the very words that she was to say to Cary Grant six years later in "Charade": "Do you know what's wrong with you? Nothing."

Photographed by Richard Avedon, New York City, 1957.

up on his desk, takes a phone call from his dermatologist in the South of France. Ruttenstein and Klein have known each other for many years. When they first met, Ruttenstein was a buyer at Lord & Taylor, and Klein was a coat designer at the Dan Millstein Coat and Suit House. "I knew Calvin before he was Calvin," Ruttenstein whispers as Klein finishes his phone call.

"Kal," Klein says when he gets off the phone, "we have to talk about Bloomingdale's windows for the new scent, cK one."

Ruttenstein wipes his mouth with his napkin. "This is for September, yes?"

"You're dead already for September?" Klein asks.

Ruttenstein squints. "I am a little dead in September. I could be undead. Our perfume buyer was saying, 'Gee, how about getting Calvin to come by when he launches the new perfume?' But I said I thought it was probably impossible."

Klein sighs. "Kal, it seems to me that the personal-appearance thing is a little bit tired now."

Ruttenstein turns to me. "When he comes to the store, about eight thousand people follow him from department to department."

"Yeah, that's valid," Klein says. "But you can't keep doing the same thing."

"Great picture of you and Marci in *Harper's Bazaar*," Ruttenstein says.

"Wasn't it great?"

"Fabulous."

Klein puts down his plate of chicken. "Now, Kal, about the scent . . ."

"Could you explain something to me?" Ruttenstein says. "This name, cK one—is that so there can be a cK two? Or is that just your internal way of talking about it?"

"Yeah, I'm thinking about oneness. I'm thinking about two halves make a whole. I'm thinking about numbers. Numbers seem cool to me."

"Right," Ruttenstein says, nodding.

"And letters. You know, like very direct."

"Oh," Ruttenstein says. "We had a waiter in the Carnegie Deli the other day who had the most hideous fragrance on, and every time he came near us we got sick. But, of course, I was curious, so I said to him, 'What is that fragrance?' 'It's really the best,' he says. 'I put it on at seven in the morning and at midnight two days later it's still there—it really lasts.' "

"These are Americans!" Klein says, slapping his forehead. "They want it to last! The perception is: If it doesn't last, it's not value for money!"

Later, after Ruttenstein has been upstairs to inspect the new collection—"These blouses, Calvin! They don't look as if they've been near a machine!"—we return to Klein's office, and Kate Moss, who has been the star of Calvin Klein's advertising campaigns for the last two years, is sent for. "Put some lipstick on her and put her in a dress and bring her to the office," Klein instructs one of his people. She arrives shortly, wearing one of Klein's new, knee-length dresses in white flock, and a pair of plastic mules. Klein and Ruttenstein stare at her thoughtfully, cocking their heads like birds, while she struts silently about the room.

"Oh, fabulous," Ruttenstein says.

"And look at the floor, Kal—look at the shoes," Klein says.

"Beautiful," Ruttenstein says.

"And look at the hair—like Veronica Lake. And the red lips. Now, that's a woman—that ain't a waif. I mean, when did you ever see me do red lips?"

"In your couture collection once," Ruttenstein says.

Klein stares at him for a moment and then laughs. "Oh, you bitch—I hate you."

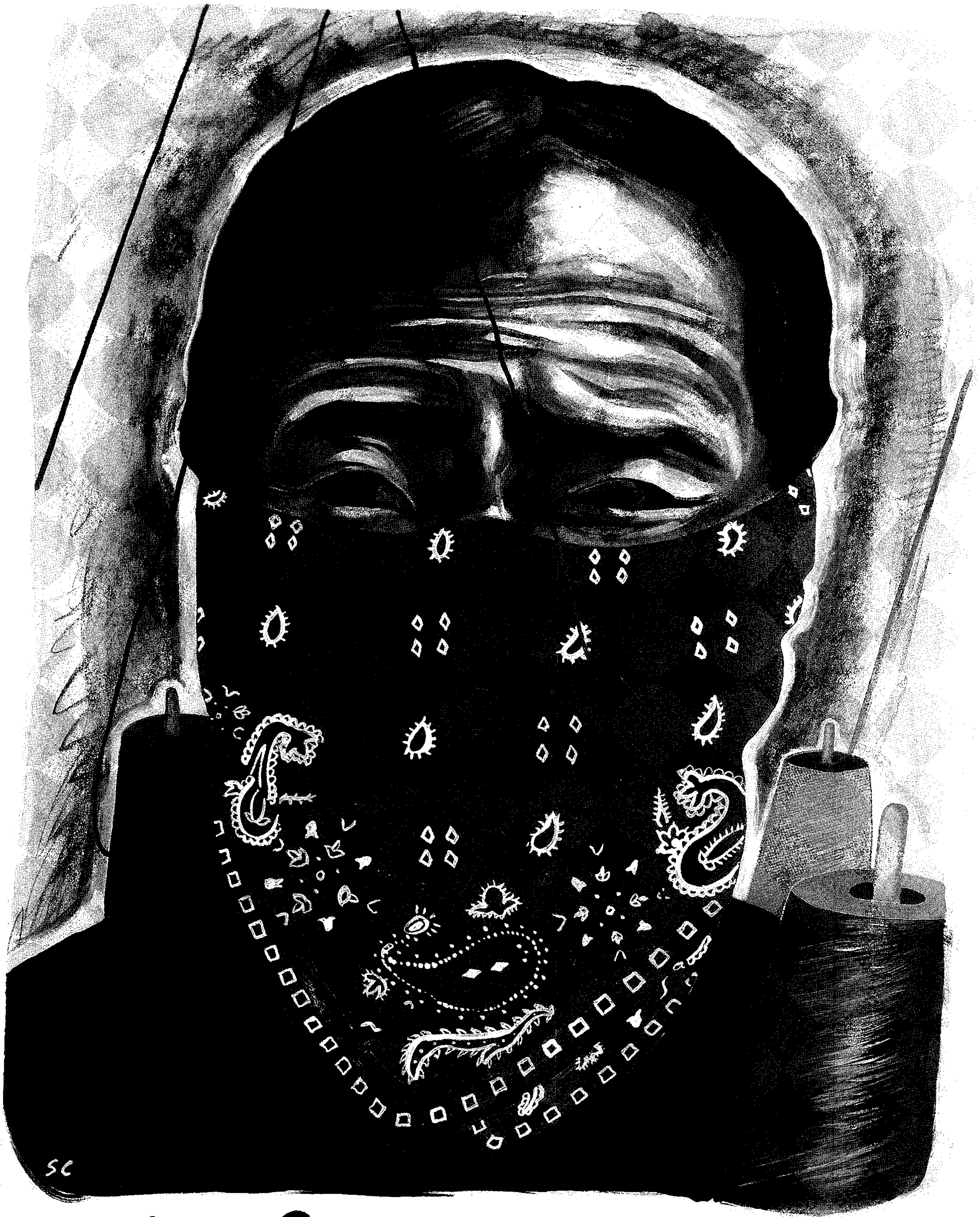
Ruttenstein laughs, too. "I couldn't resist."

There is something touchingly anachronistic about this meandering conversation between designer and retailer. Their slightly hammy banter—the product of years of squabbles, reunions, gossip sessions, negotiations, and gift-giving—invokes a different era, before consolidation and mergers and centralized buying strategies became the retail trend. Like a friendly corner grocer still trading in the looming shadow of a new mega-mart, Ruttenstein, with his digressive, *intime* mode of doing business, defies the spirit of the conglomerate age. He is mournfully aware of this. In business terms, he says, his job is on the way out. As more and more stores have been swallowed up by monster chains, the number of fashion directors has dwindled. The contribution made by a fashion director was never calculable in monetary terms, and for the few, big companies that have survived to fight it out with one another, the temptation is to see the fashion director's job as a dispensable luxury. Shortly after Dawn Mello assumed the presidency of Bergdorf Goodman this year, she eliminated the fashion director's position. Ellin Saltzman lost her job, and her responsibilities have been taken over by the senior merchants already in place. "More and more, the merchants are operating on their own," Ruttenstein says sadly. "The fashion director is a dying breed. Put it this way—if I had children, I wouldn't advise them to go into the profession. We're like 'Jurassic Park' around here."

Ruttenstein's embattled position—like that of the corner grocer—tends to elicit a sentimental response. But he is far too canny to play up to it. He doesn't want to be preserved on the ground that he is a cute period piece. If he has proved to be one of the hardier dinosaurs, it is, he believes, because he has proved himself properly invaluable. If Ruttenstein were to disappear tomorrow, the merchants and the P.R. people could take up some of the slack, but who would remember what Calvin Klein was like when he was just a coat designer at Dan Millstein? Who would remember the last time Klein put red lipstick on his models?

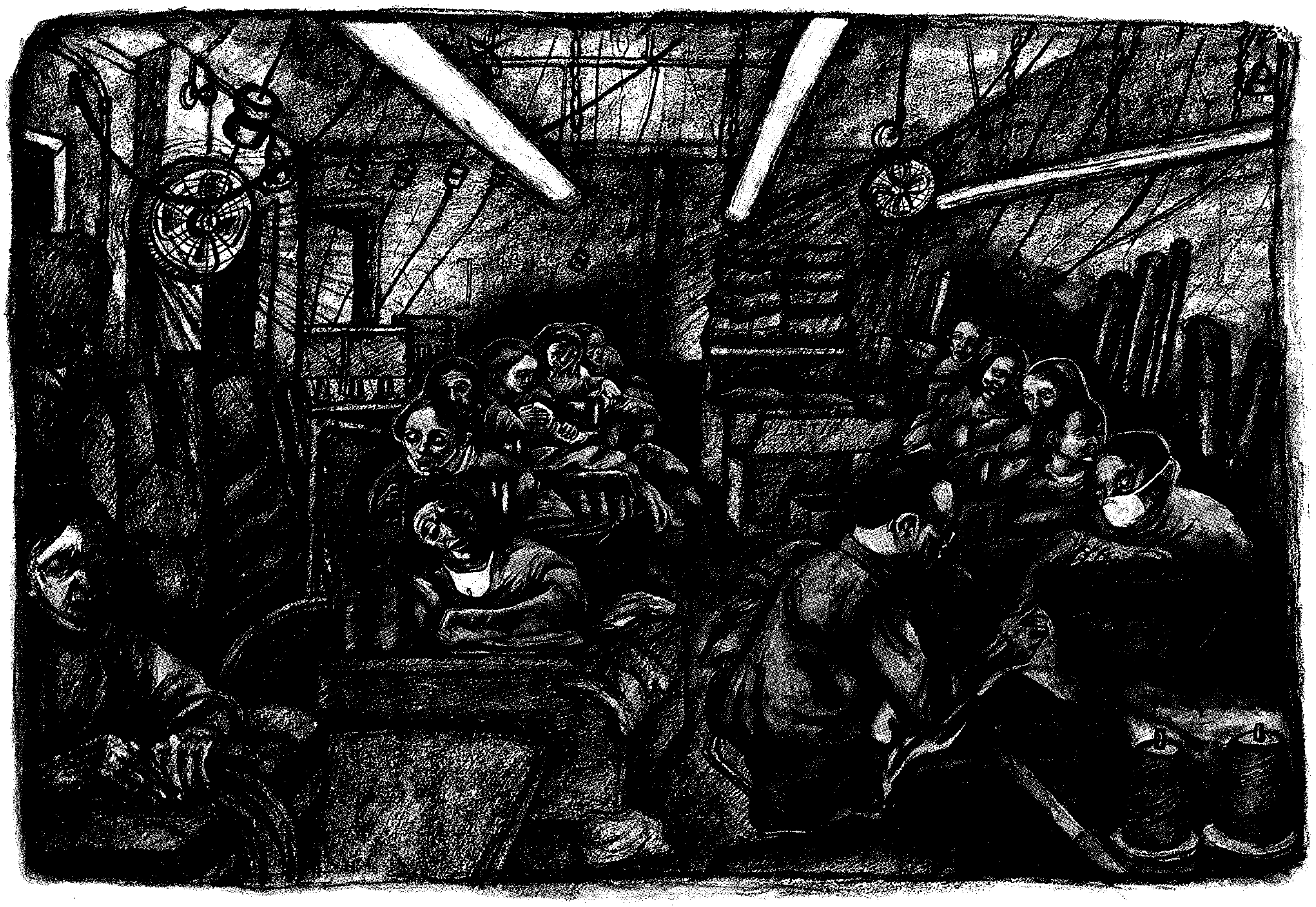
After the meeting with Calvin Klein, Ruttenstein and I go to a dingy cafeteria on Seventh Avenue where he eats a Skimpy Treat diet frozen yogurt and talks about skirt lengths—the knee length favored by Klein and by Prada at the moment compared with the short-short look that dominated in Paris. "It's good that someone knows this stuff," he says. "The store has given me a lot of exposure—sent me all over the world—so I can know this stuff." Suddenly he looks at his watch. "What time you got? Oh I gotta go!" he exclaims, setting down his Skimpy Treat. "I'm going to be late for Nicole Miller's show!"

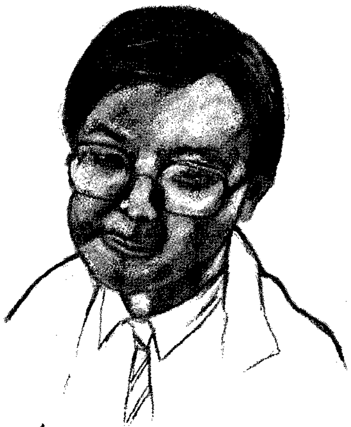
Outside, we say a hurried goodbye and Ruttenstein gives me a few of hi solemn kisses. "Oh! Oh! I don't want to be late," he is murmuring as he move off. When I look back, he is crossing the avenue against the light. His tie ha flown up around his neck and he is ver nearly jogging. ♦



The SweatShop, 1994

BY SUE COE



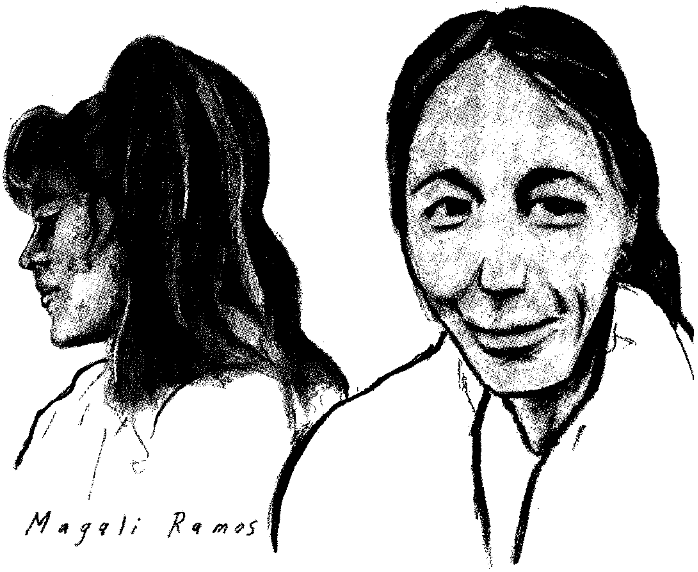


Andy Chan

I did these drawings as I accompanied three investigators for the New York State Department of Labor Apparel Industry Task Force on their rounds of Manhattan's garment district. We visited six sweatshops, all non-union. Since the early eighties, conditions in some areas of the garment industry have deteriorated, and the sweatshop has re-emerged as a fact of life for thousands of workers.

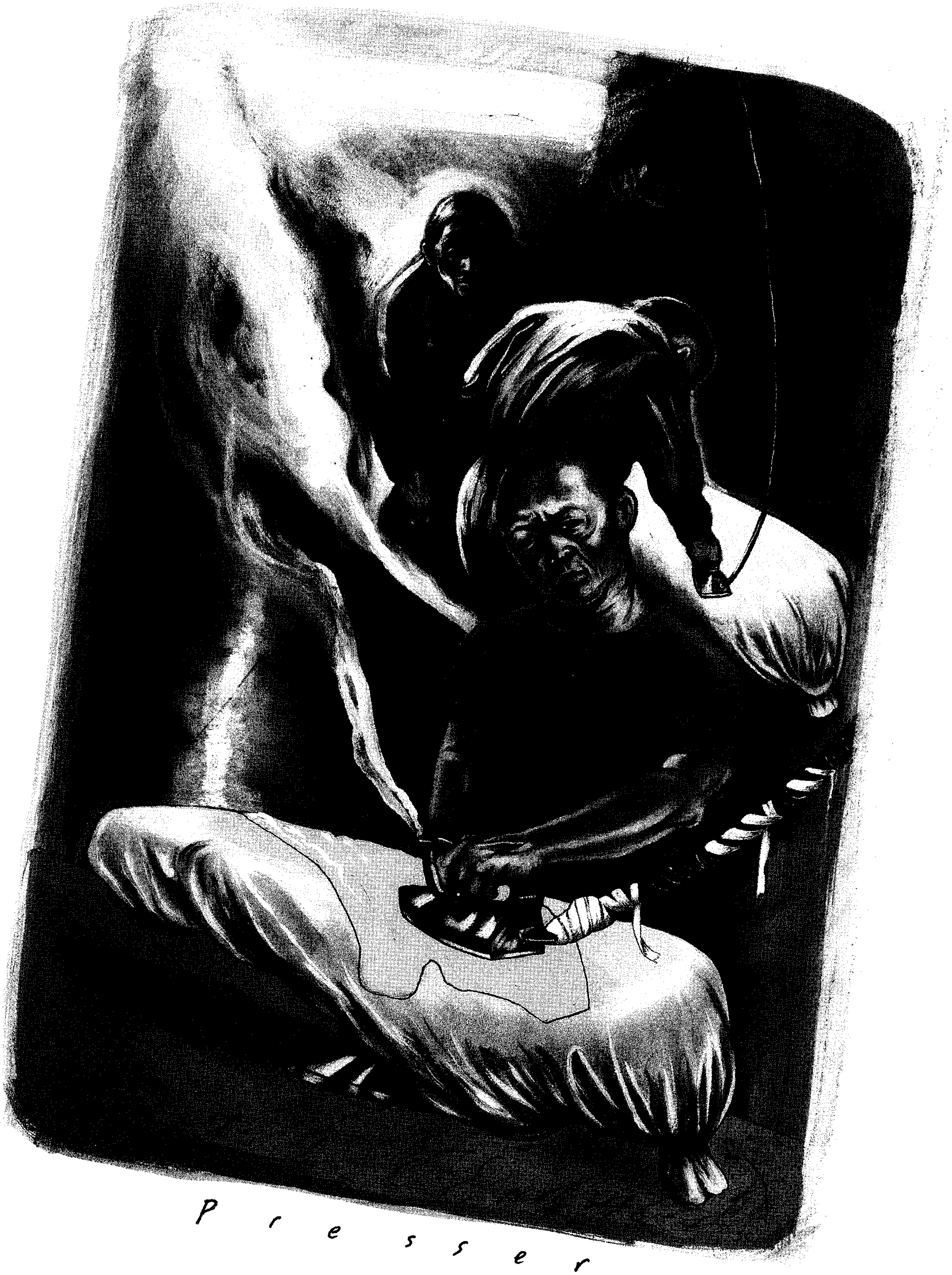
The investigators visit shops against which complaints have been lodged, and also make random checks. They make sure that employees are being paid, that child-labor laws are not being violated, that the machines are operating safely, and that there are no blocked exits or other fire hazards.

"The youngest garment worker I have seen was a ten-year-old floor worker in Chinatown."
— Andy Chan



Magali Ramos

Ellen Davidow
(Senior Investigator)



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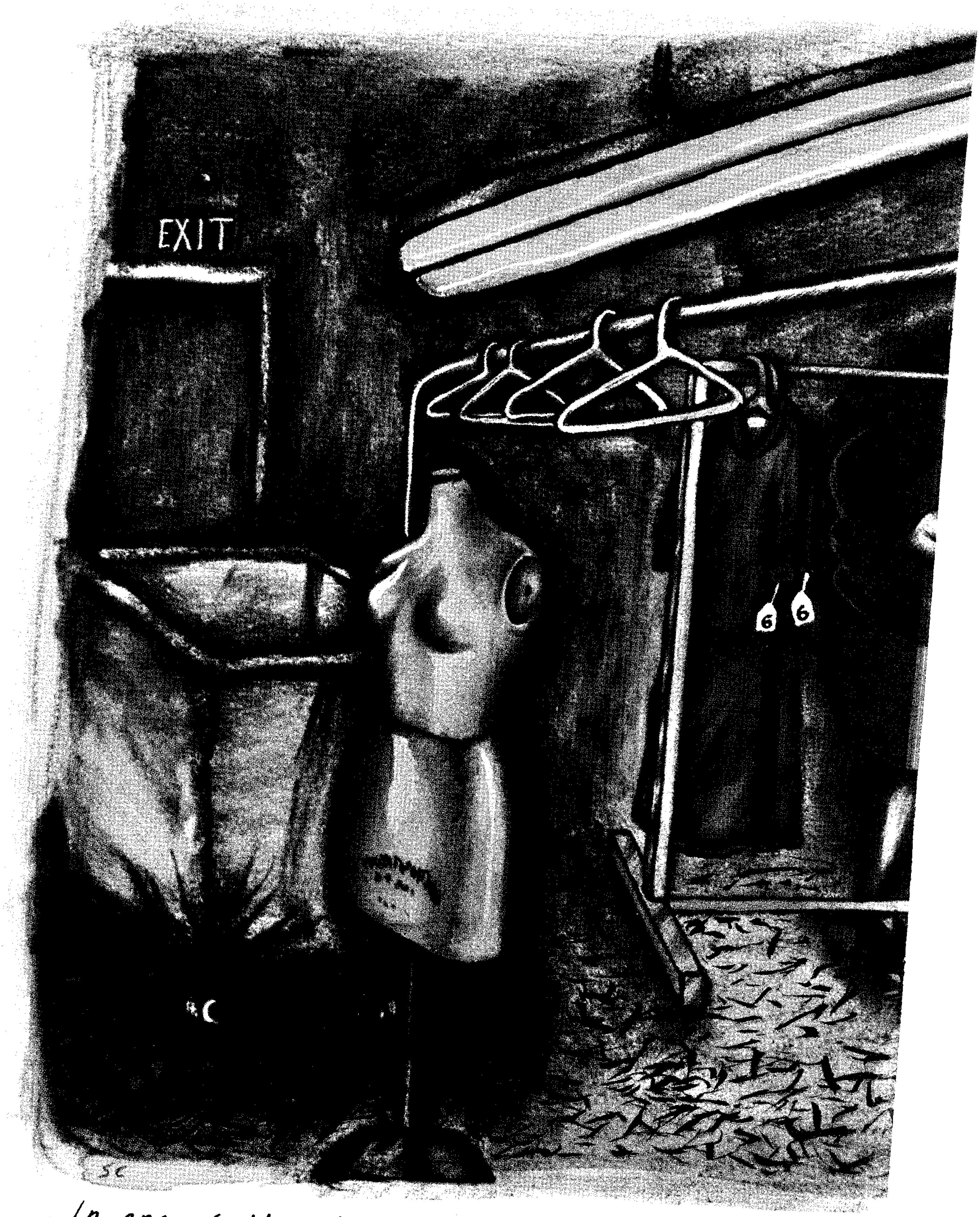
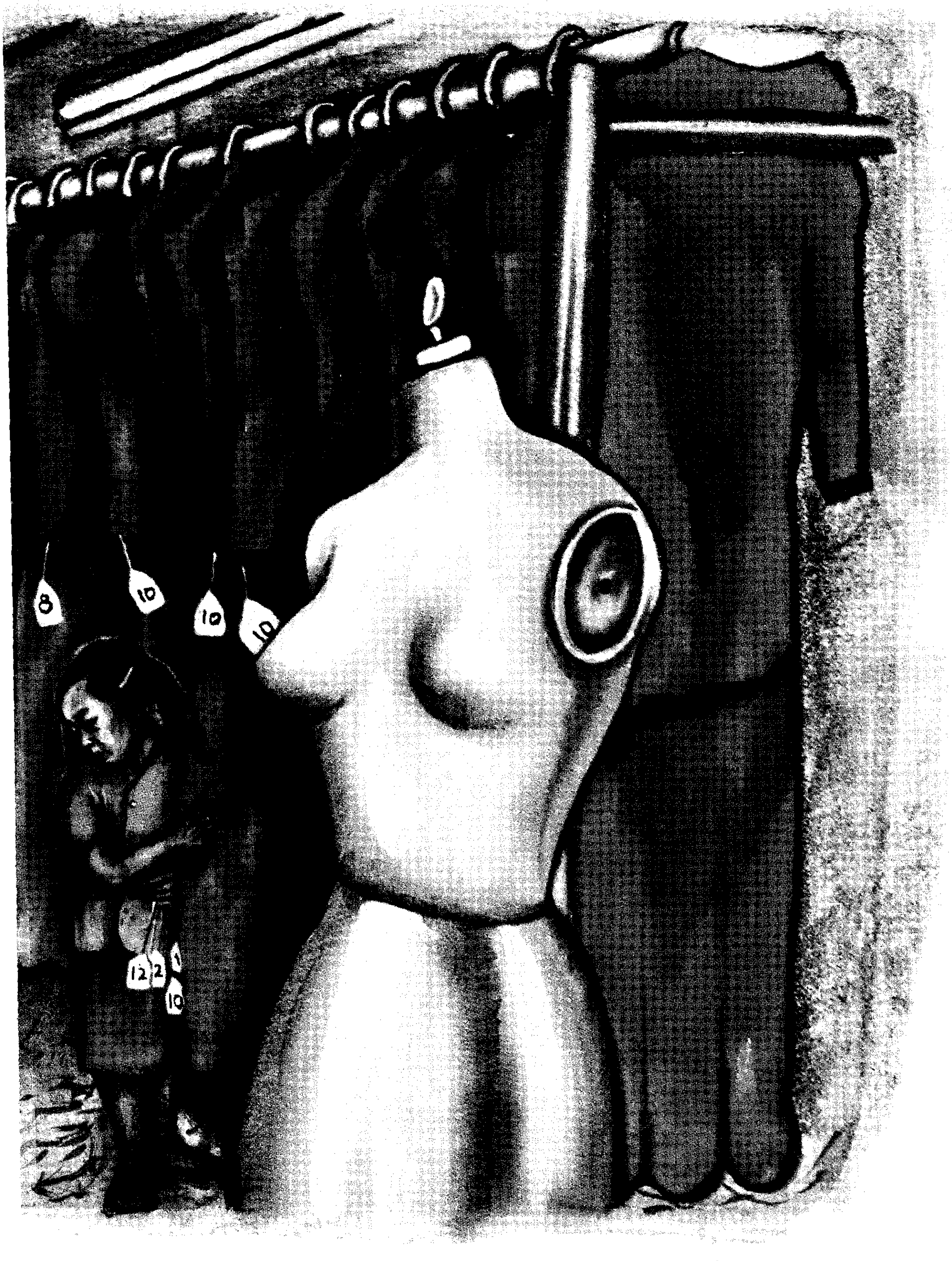


In one of the shops we visited, the workers had not been paid in five weeks.

"The bosses tell their workers we are from the immigration police, so the workers are suspicious and won't talk to us." – Ellen Davido



"There is a big contrast between the famous-designer-label showroom and the typical sweatshop, where these garments are made. The manufacturers contract with marginal shops—they go to the lowest bidder, but they keep their hands clean." – Ellen Davidow

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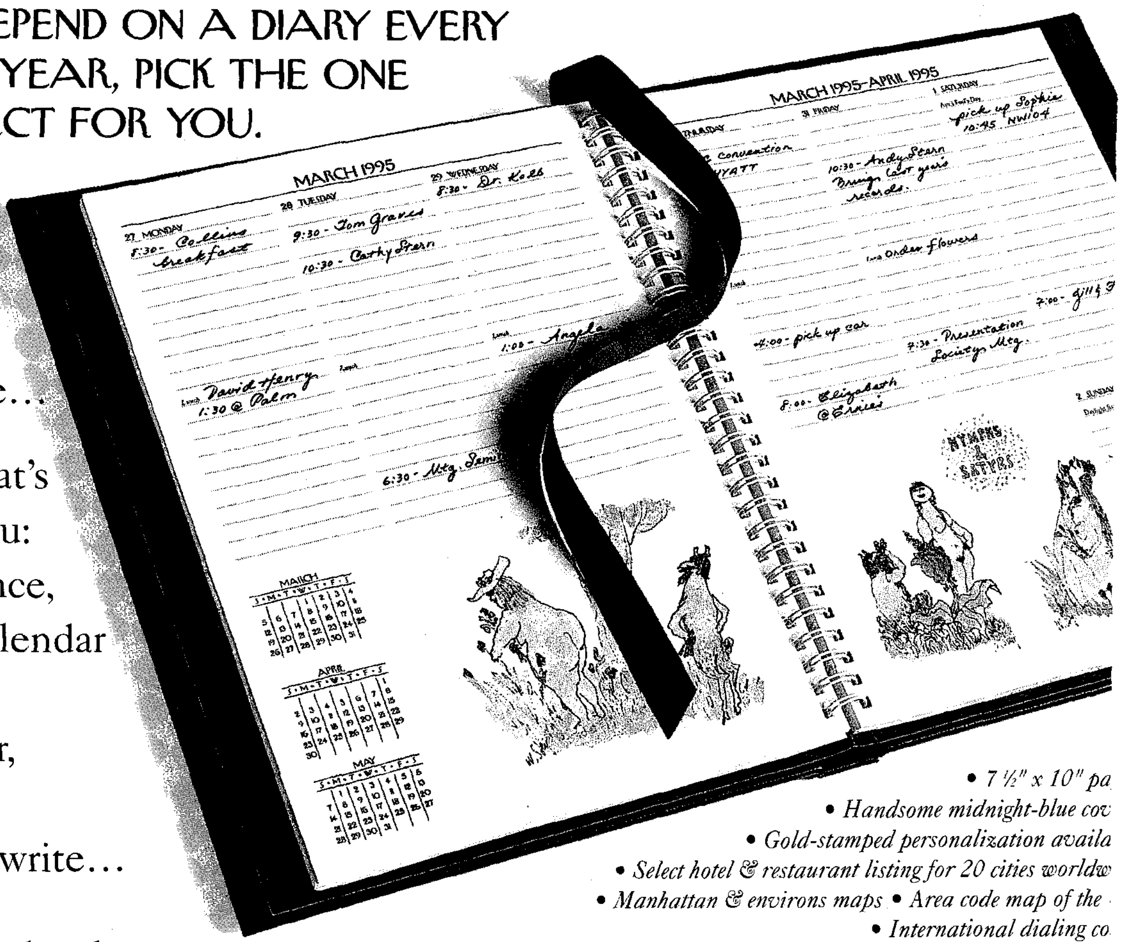

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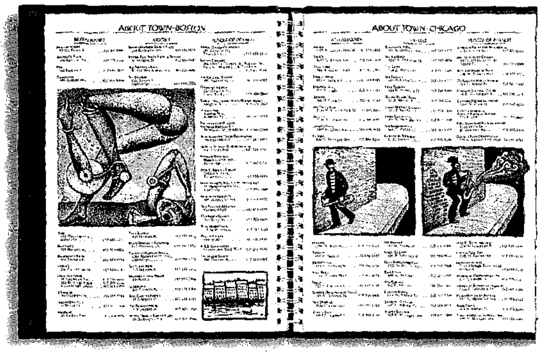

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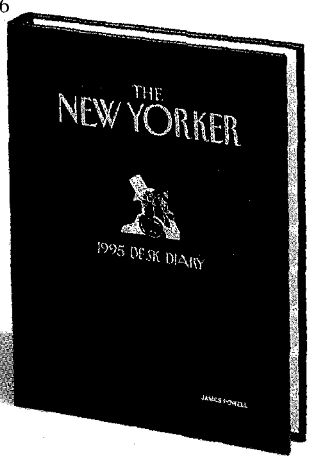
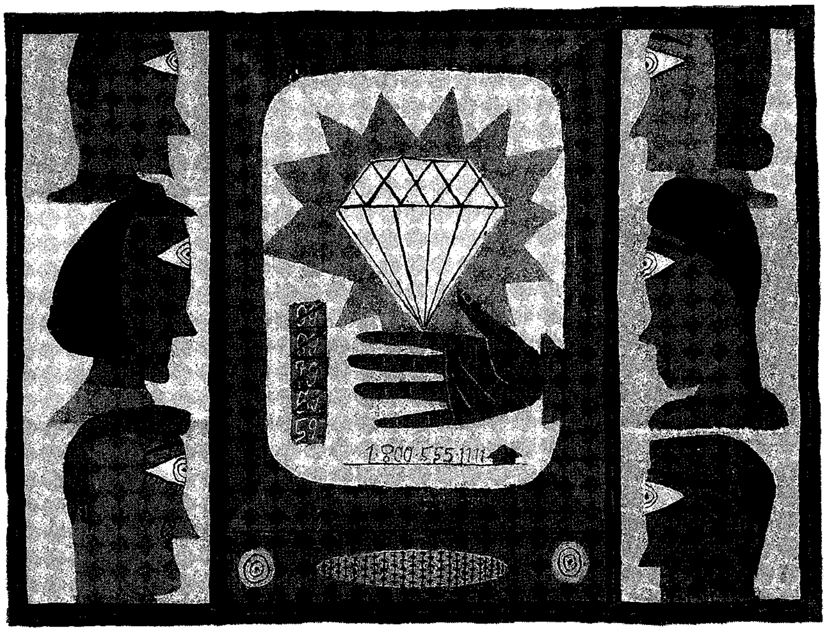


BRAVE NEW WORLD DEPARTMENT

GOOD MORNING, MIDDLE AMERICA

Home shopping is where catalogue shopping was twenty years ago. While big-name designers still shun the tube, the new generation is getting interactive.

BY JOHN SEABROOK



THE brainstorming for "Isaac Mizrahi: A Frockumentary," a home-shopping program that premièred this week on the Nickelodeon channel, began in July, with a meeting in Mizrahi's showroom, in SoHo. The elevator was out of order, so the Nickelodeon delegation walked up four flights. Mizrahi hadn't arrived yet. Everyone sat down at a long table, where an assistant was setting out bottles of Pellegrino. Leading the group was Rich Cronin, the forty-year-old general manager of Nick at Nite, Nickelodeon's nighttime block of nostalgia programming, which features shows like "I Love Lucy," "The Dick Van Dyke Show," "Bewitched," "Get Smart," and "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." Accompanying him were Jim Burns, the executive producer of the "Frockumentary"; Mary Salter, the supervising producer; Paul Ward, Nick at Nite's publicity director; and Gabé Doppelt, who is MTV Networks' liaison with the fashion world.

At a quarter past ten, Mizrahi swept into the showroom. He appeared to have dressed like Lucy for the meeting—in black pants and a white shirt, with his inky hair tied up in a black-and-white bandanna—but in fact this is his usual work attire. He sat down at one end of the table, lit a cigarette, and smoked theatrically. Before Mizrahi arrived, Cronin had been telling the group that his wife had just given birth to their fourth child, and Doppelt reported this to Mizrahi.

"Well, *I* had a gardenia," Mizrahi said to her, a madcap expression coming over his face.

The "Frockumentary" is one part of MTV Networks' elaborate, eleven-part home-shopping experiment, which is a joint venture with Fingerhut, a direct-marketing company. The whole project, called The Goods, with Cindy Crawford as spokesperson, is being tested on MTV, VH1, and Nick at Nite through January. The plan is to use the results of the experiments to design a separate home-shopping channel, which MTV hopes to launch in 1995. Some of the tests have already happened. This fall, the Rolling Stones' " 'Voodoo Lounge' Rockumentary" sold between one and two million dollars' worth of merchandise. The Woodstock home-shopping program (selling Woodstock raincoats, the official staff sweatshirt, and commemorative ticket stubs) sold about a million dollars' worth of merchandise.

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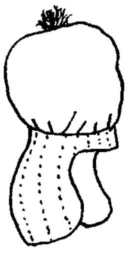
But the "Beavis and Butt-head Mega Model Jam," a fashion show with models wearing "Beavis and Butt-head" boxer shorts and T-shirts, was less successful, because the 1-800 phone lines were jammed with teen-age "Beavis and Butt-head" fans calling to say "Uhhh, could I buy the model? Yeah, yeah; heh-heh-heh." One of the executives involved in the "Beavis and Butt-head" test told me, "It's sort of funny unless you're trying to make a business out of it, and then it's not so funny. It's sort of a nightmare."

The job of persuading designers to participate in MTV's home-shopping experiment fell to Doppelt. Fashion is a visual enterprise, so you'd expect fashion designers to embrace television. But in fact mainstream American designers, like Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, and Donna Karan, are conservative in their use of television. They rose to prominence during the reign of the still photograph, which replaced the illustration as the dominant language of fashion in the print media of the sixties and seventies, and they are masters at manipulating printed images to create a sense of style that goes far beyond the characteristics of their clothes. But think of how much more pervasive the sense of Ralph Lauren or Calvin Klein style could be if it were projected twenty-four hours a day on POLO-TV or CK-TV. Ralph Lauren has a sumptuous four-story store in New York, and his company designs and staffs dozens of other Polo shops around the country, choosing each salesperson for his or her Polo look. The cost of the sales help, the furnishings, and the real estate must come to much more than the cost of POLO-TV would, and POLO-TV could reach many more people.



Doppelt decided to target the younger generation of designers. In addition to Mizrahi, who is thirty-three, she has signed up Anna Sui, Marc Jacobs, and Todd Oldham, who is doing a line of patchwork and denim for MTV, and a collection of tableware for Nick at Nite. When Doppelt first approached Mizrahi with the idea of doing something for VH1, he declined. "Then she mentioned Nick at Nite," Mizrahi told me, "and I began to think I could do something." It turned out that Mizrahi was a devoted fan of Nick at Nite, and that Laura Petrie, the character played by Mary Tyler Moore on "The Dick Van Dyke Show," is a Mizrahi womanly ideal. "There has got to be a pretty woman, who is pretty but in control at the same time," Mizrahi said. "This person is symbolized by what I have referred to in my collection as Laura Petrie style."

Mizrahi's main concern with selling clothes on television was the potential damage to his high-fashion image. Like many designers, he did not want to appear "too QVC"—a reference to the channel that shares with the Home Shopping Network (HSN) the distinction of being one of the only successful home-shopping formats now on television.

"I can't be out there hocking," Mizrahi said to Rich Cronin as the brainstorming got going.

"I completely agree with you," Cronin replied, making a reassuring motion with his hand.

A certain amount of exposure to middle America is fascinating to designers, but fashion is about mystery and exclusivity, and nothing about shopping on national television, at least as it exists today, is mysterious or exclusive. On the other hand, every designer would like to have the selling power of QVC. Diane Von Furstenberg is one of a few well-known designers who appear on the channel. Last November, she sold more than twelve thousand embroidered silk blouses, priced at $59.98, in less than twenty minutes. Imagine that amount of silk flying off the shelves of a store in the real world. The QVC technicians have designed a program that instantly tabulates the volume of sales, which appears on a monitor as a seismic line. If a host says, "Now, my mother uses these," and the line jumps up, the producer can tell him to keep that sales pitch going. To anyone with the heart of a merchant, watching this line is like watching your EKG.

In agreeing to do Nick at Nite, Mizrah was running an additional risk: that by associating himself with electronic retail he might alienate traditional retailers—namely, the big department stores—who view home shopping as a threat to thei businesses. Mizrahi was hoping to appease Bloomingdale's et al. with the fact that his Nick at Nite collection was exclusive to Nick at Nite, and was not competing with the Mizrahi collections in the stores. Bu Mizrahi's wealthy clients, who pay as much as five thousand dollars for one o his dresses, might not be pleased that ordinary people could now buy a Mizrah

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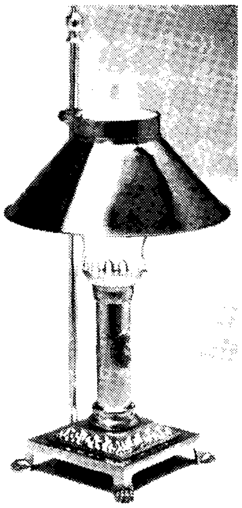

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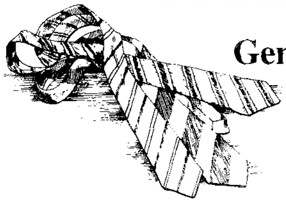

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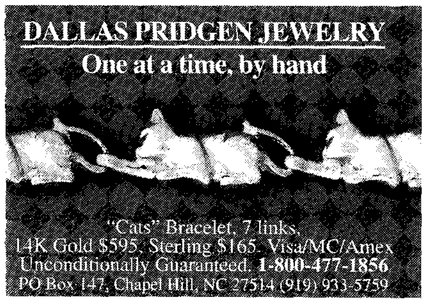

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dress for around a hundred dollars on television. In effect, Mizrahi's alliance with Nick at Nite is the TV equivalent of Calvin Klein's decision, in 1977, to license his name to jeans merchants.

"Would it work for me to pretend that I'm Edward R. Murrow?" Mizrahi asked now. "Like I'm on this old set, talking about the clothes. Wouldn't it be fun to have me talking to Mary Tyler Moore?"

"It might work," Cronin said.

"Or," Mizrahi said excitedly, "instead of me and Mary Tyler Moore in her home, it might be more fabulous if somehow I could actually interview Laura Petrie."

"Could he smoke?" Doppelt asked.

"Yes," Cronin said. "Smoking would be allowed."

"I love that," Mizrahi said. "I'm out there with this desk and a fabulous palm tree. Instead of guests I would have the TV sitcoms, and I would interview the stars. It would be divine."

Cronin added, "The way to engineer it would be to use parts of the shows. Like Laura and Rob are having friends over and making dinner; then we cut away and show our kitchen line. Do you remember that 'Mary Tyler Moore' episode when the green dress was cut open . . . ?"

"Do I remember it!" Mizrahi's eyes widened.

"Well, that could work as one of the fashion episodes."

They talked about whether or not to have a host on the show. Hosts are the most dependable method of selling clothes, but they are also one of the things that give home shopping its cheesy image.

"Is there a classic TV celebrity we could use?" Cronin said.

"Who isn't too old?" Mizrahi said.

"Barbara Feldon? Shirley Jones?"

"One of the Brady kids? What is the demo?"

"Eighteen to forty-nine."

Mizrahi asked, "What about a model? Veronica?"

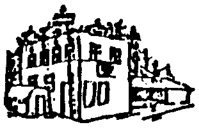
"Veronica may be doing 'Beavis and Butt-head,' " Doppelt reported.

"I guess we could just do it with you," Jim Burns said, "but I think people need to know who you are. We need to introduce you to Middle America."

" 'This Is Your Life'?" Mizrahi said.

"Something," Cronin said. "We've got to get you out there."

"Could it be a makeover party? Like



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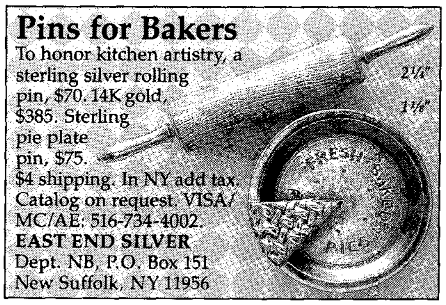

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a pajama party? Me and America in our p.j.s?" Mizrahi straightened up pertly, in a way that seemed to indicate sitting with Middle America in their p.j.s.

Cronin said, "Maybe we should do a more or less straightforward documentary, in which Isaac just talks about the clothes. Could you just talk about the clothes?"

"I *love* synthetics," Mizrahi said to an imaginary camera.

Cronin held up a finger. "*America* loves synthetics," he said.

THE fashion industry's notion of television shopping is something like the notion most of us have of our own death: the evidence suggests that it will happen, but we can't imagine it. When Barry Diller took over QVC, nearly two years ago, apparel-, cosmetics-, and jewelry-makers were bombarded with proposals from media entrepreneurs to do home-shopping programs. They all heard the same numbers: total United States retail sales in 1993, two trillion dollars; catalogue sales, twenty-six billion dollars; TV retail sales, three billion dollars. TV is the most powerful medium for social intercourse ever invented—and it accounts for only about a tenth of one per cent of all retail sales in the country. However, this number is growing fast. QVC has reached one billion dollars in gross sales in only seven years.

In June of 1993, Macy's announced that it was starting a Macy's channel with Cablevision Systems, but now the store is saying that the channel has been delayed. Estée Lauder made an infomercial but has not yet decided whether to run it. Joan Rivers did a show called "Can We Shop?"—which was a landmark, because it was not on a shopping channel but was syndicated, the way a regular talk show might be. Although sales were good (about fourteen million dollars in the six months it was on the air), the average rating was poor, and in July the show stopped running.

Mark Rosenthal, one of the media executives the retail industry has been hearing from, is the head of MTV Networks' home-shopping experiment. "If you think about it," Rosenthal told me, "there is nothing inherently pejorative about buying off your TV. People buy out of catalogues. There's nothing wrong with a sales message on TV—witness commercials—and there's everything right with seeing more color, more motion, sound, attitude. What is wrong with that? Nothing. But there's such a cultura disconnect between the public and TV home shopping now. People say, 'Oh, it's home shopping—I'm not into it.' So in retail we say to ourselves, 'All right, i transactional TV is the next step, and i the market could be huge, and if all we have now is QVC and HSN and some infomercials, then how do we get from here to there quickly?' That's what we're trying to figure out."

One way you can tell that QVC is primitive version of whatever television shopping will become is that it doesn' work with the sound off. The voice is the selling mechanism. In the voices of QVC are the friendliness and the social life—the warmth—that you pine for. They are the vocal equivalent of the smiley sign that people send to each other in E-mai messages. Everyone on QVC speak constantly of beauty and love:

"Hello, this is Darlene from Georgia."
"Hello, Darlene from Georgia, and what ar you shopping for today?"
"I'm getting the earrings."
"Don't you just love those, Darlene?"
"Well, I just think they're so beautiful."
"And you know what, Darlene? You're s smart for thinking they're beautiful."
"Oh, I just love them so much."
"Hey, congratulations, Darlene. Great call!

QVC is supported by a core group o viewers who buy repeatedly. Regulars ar sent a program guide that tells them about the real lives of their favorit home-shopping hosts, who are known collectively as "the QVC family."

Last June, QVC began airing a more upscale channel, Q2, which appears in eleven million homes around the country on weekends. Q2 is QVC for yuppies ("The best thing to happen to your weekend since cash machines," one of its promo lines goes.) Barry Diller has calle it Gap-TV. On Q2, instead of dolls an cubic zirconium you can buy mountai bikes and software. The hosts have credentials in the print fashion world. Th pictures move much faster on Q2 than o QVC. Editorializing about fashion i more important, and making you fee good is less important.

Q2 is located in Silvercup Studios, i Long Island City, and the sets show o the Manhattan skyline. Candice Carpenter, who was until recently the presiden of Q2, told me, "Home shopping has traditionally had a sense of being enclosed inside, and we are trying to open that up

We show the city, the crew, the buyers, and we run on-location stuff. We try to give a sense of the world, so it doesn't seem hermetically sealed, and seems more relevant to people's lives. So, for example, when the U.S. Open was on, we had scores rolling across the screen."

It appears that QVC, Inc., will be bought by Comcast, a cable company. Two weeks ago, shortly after the sale was announced, twenty people at Q2 were laid off, in an effort to streamline the company. Apparently, neither Diller nor Diane Von Furstenberg, the creative-planning director of Q2, shows up in the office much anymore. Von Furstenberg had wanted to recruit well-known designers to do lines exclusively for Q2, and she got a vague commitment from Karl Lagerfeld, but the idea apparently came too early for most designers. "When the theatre is there, they will come," she told me. "The theatre is not there yet."

In September, on the day I visited Q2, Harriet Mays, who is one of the hosts, was taping a show called "Casual Transition." Mays is a former *Times* fashion stylist; instead of QVC-style honeyed Southern hospitality, her voice is inflected with urban irony. I went upstairs to talk to Candice Carpenter, and after a while Mays came in, her work done.

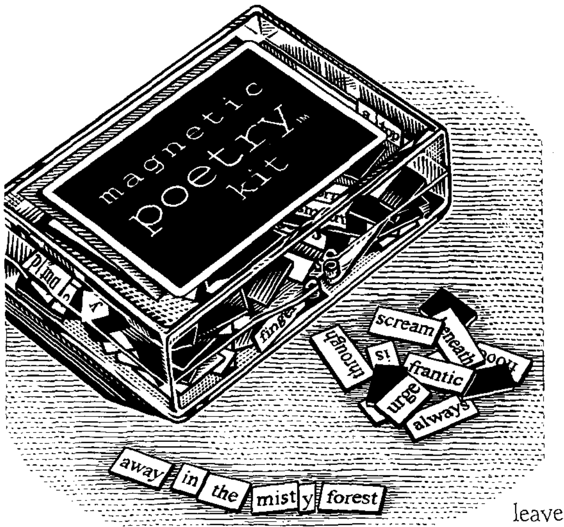
"How did it go?" Carpenter asked.

Mays said, "I'm getting a *leet-tle* tired of selling the blue warmup suit with the stretch waist."

Carpenter turned to me and said, "A lot of people around here have what I call H.S.D.—Home Shopping Denial."

"Def," Mays said. "I can't *believe* I'm on a home-shopping show."

HOME shopping, considered in the broader context of the evolution of TV, appears to be an early form of transactional television—television that makes money not by selling advertising to outside companies, which is the way the industry grew, but by generating product sales and promotional value through the programming itself. When you watch a TV show now, you see entertainment followed by a commercial, followed by more entertainment. In a transactional world, the entertainment will be a commercial for itself. It will have to be. There isn't enough advertising money around to support the five-hundred-channel universe that seems to be in our future, and each channel will be



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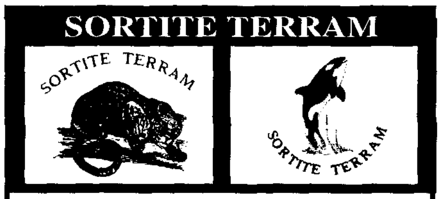

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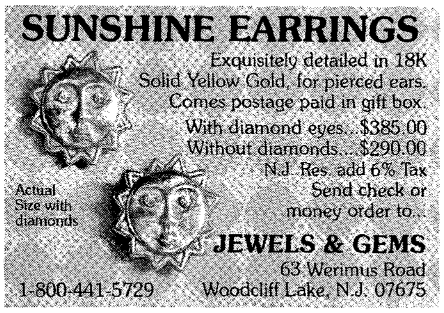

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too narrowly focussed to be of much value to advertisers anyway.

Gordon Cooke is the president of Time Warner's interactive-merchandizing division, which includes a joint venture with the Spiegel company called Catalog 1. He refers to his and others' efforts at designing an appealing transactional format as "cracking the code."

"What's the code?" he said to me in his office at Time Warner. "What's the blend of information, selling, and entertainment that will do the trick? It can't be a program that you think is entertainment and that then turns out to be an ad, because that will piss people off. But it can't be a hard sell, like QVC, because that turns people off, too."

I said that some people think you'll soon be able to buy the furniture in Frasier's apartment while you're watching "Frasier." Jerry Seinfeld sells American Express in commercials, so why shouldn't he sell it on "Seinfeld"?

Cooke said he didn't think this would work. "You know, Donna Karan might do an outfit for Murphy Brown, but it doesn't make sense for Donna Karan to do a Murphy Brown line and sell it on 'Murphy Brown.' I just don't think Murphy Brown has the credibility to sell product."

Cooke, who ran Bloomingdale's By Mail for fifteen years, told me that he thought the TV retail business had arrived at the same juncture that the print-catalogue business had reached in the early seventies: "Then the thinking was that catalogues were for a down-market, rural audience, and that they wouldn't work for selling upscale products." Now, if you are in the right demo, catalogues from places like Victoria's Secret, Orvis, and Tweeds bomb your mailbox on most mornings.

Catalog 1 is testing half-hour-long videos of products made by Eddie Bauer, Williams-Sonoma, and Neiman Marcus, among other companies, in a total of seven million homes around the country. Catalog 1 is unlike QVC and Q2 in that none of the programming is live. Most of it is shot on location, so there's no studio; the company is located in a commercial loft on West Twenty-sixth Street. The disadvantage of not being live is that you can't change the product during airtime to respond to sales, which is one of the things that make QVC such a great business. (Products that don't sell immediately are quickly jerked off camera.) However, as Rod Parker, the general manager of Catalog 1, put it to me, "the live thing does not really work for the digital world to come." Parker draws a distinction between analog television, which is what we have now, and the digital television we're supposed to have soon. "The great drawback to analog TV in terms of home shopping is that you have to sit through a lot of programming before you see a product you like. Print catalogues are interactive in a way that TV is not—you can open them and flip right to what you want when you want to."

All this will change in three or four years, Parker said, when Time Warner's Full Service Network, which is being tested this fall in Orlando, is widely installed. Parker showed me a video of how the Full Service Network can be used to interact digitally with a swimsuit catalogue. You start with a menu of all the catalogues in the system, click on the swimsuits, and then bring up a video of a model wearing the first suit you're interested in. The model is frisking in the surf in a style reminiscent of *Sports Illustrated's* work in the genre. On the edges of your TV screen you can open other video windows with more models in more suits, cavorting in the waves. Even more alluring are the little color buttons: when you click your remote on one of them, the model's suit mutates to the selected color. Time Warner has been showing this demonstration at cable conventions for about half a year now, and it's certainly been getting the attention of the men in the audience. It is hard to watch it without subconsciously wondering why, if we have the technology to make the swimsuits change colors, we can't just make the swimsuits disappear.

THE Holy Grail of TV shopping, the thing that no one in electronic retailing has figured out how to do yet, is to create images so compelling tha people can't resist buying somethin while they're watching. MTV is an evolutionary step in this direction, in th sense that its videos are ads for music, bu you can't (yet) buy the music while yo are watching MTV. What if there wer a channel that used fashion in the wa MTV uses music? This is Anthon Guccione's vision, and his venture i called FAD-TV.

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"In a music video the sound is primary, but the visual element is more compelling," Guccione told me when I met him in his SoHo loft, which also serves as his office. "If you turn the sound down on MTV, what are you left with? Fashion videos. Look at the Madonna videos. Or the Guns N' Roses videos with Stephanie Seymour."

Guccione, who is the son of Bob, the founder of *Penthouse*, and the younger brother of Bob, Jr., the founder of *Spin*, is a confident young man of thirty-three who speaks with a slight English accent. When I met him, he was wearing a turquoise blazer, a black shirt, and black pants. Some of his staff had unexpectedly quit a few days earlier, and when I arrived he was interviewing a fresh-faced young woman from the Midwest for the job of personal assistant. I sat down on a crescent-shaped leather sofa and waited. As the interview was concluding, the cellular phone chirped. It was Guccione's girlfriend, calling from Milan. The young woman from the Midwest strolled past me, said, "Great space," and walked gracefully toward the other end of the loft. "I think I just found a new assistant," Guccione murmured into the phone.

Guccione expects FAD-TV to be supported mainly by traditional advertising; home shopping will provide "an ancillary revenue stream." The fashion industry will make the videos. "The key for FAD-TV's sex, um, success—Freudian slip, right?—is that it has to be entertaining," Guccione said. "I find fashion on television to be completely unexploited. On CNN you've got Elsa Klensch, the doyenne of fashion TV, but it's plodding, pedestrian, overjournalistic—and I don't mean that in the wrong way, because I come from a journalistic background. Fashion is about fantasy, and if you dissect it you burst the bubble."

Guccione asked if I was ready to see his ten-minute film of FAD-TV, which is the most impressive asset he has at this point. We went into the TV-viewing area of the loft and sat on two huge beanbag-style mounds. I had heard that the film was hot, and it was better than I expected. Christy, Linda, and Kate all put in appearances. The music wasn't limited to any particular genre. The clothes looked great, and everything was for sale. Midway through, Guccione paused the tape and said, "The idea is that after watching FAD-TV you're left

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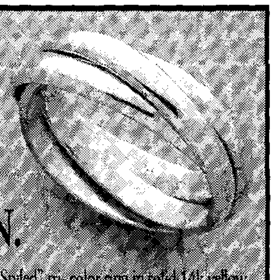

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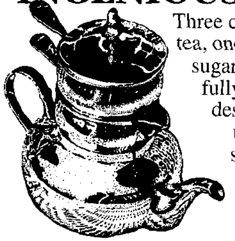

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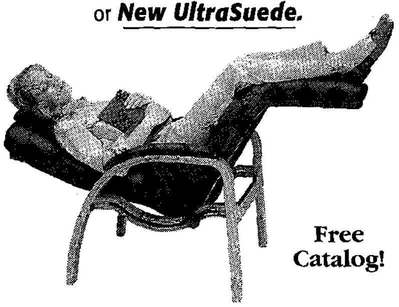

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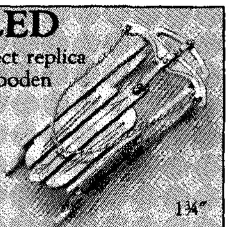

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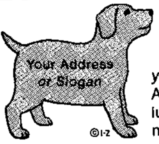

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with an automatic purchase desire." He started the tape again. When it was over, we sat there for a minute on the beanbag mounds. Guccione said, "You can feel it, can't you?"

AFTER the July meeting, Mizrahi and the Nick at Nite people got together about five more times. The idea of Mizrahi playing Edward R. Murrow evolved into an actor playing Edward R. Murrow and interviewing Mizrahi, and eventually Murrow was scrapped in favor of a documentary-style presentation of Mizrahi, in black-and-white. The producers were designing a kind of perpetual-promotion machine. Nickelodeon would sell Mizrahi by constructing the "Frockumentary" around him, and inside the frame of the "Frockumentary" Mizrahi would sell Nick at Nite. In the show, Mizrahi explains to Cindy Crawford how the programs on Nick at Nite have inspired him as a designer. During one scene, he says, "I have always longed to put on an apron at some point and have a cocktail party and have hors d'œuvres that had little, you know, toothpicks that were decorated on the end. I think that is one of the great joys of life. That is like a secret joy. It's like there's the understanding of the Bible, and then there's the understanding of a cheese-and-shrimp ball."

As I watched this with Jim Burns, the producer, I asked whether he was worried that Mizrahi might alarm some Nick at Nite viewers, who were tuning in expecting to find Lucy.

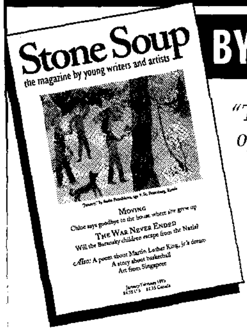
"It's a concern," Burns said.

Mizrahi has designed six pieces for his Nick at Nite collection: an A-line dress ($90), a black pant with an elastic waistband and a vinyl belt ($95), a black "wet look" jacket ($160), a "wet look" tote bag ($65), a long black cardigan sweater ($99), and a ruffled white shirt ($104). Most of the clothes are made of acrylic jersey. Mizrahi is known for using the most expensive fabrics and the best tailoring, so the world of polyester presented challenges for him. In an interview with Charles Gandee, who writes for *Vogue*, Mizrahi kept referring to the wet-look jacket and tote bag, which are made of vinyl, as "patent leather." Gandee eventually pointed this out. "All right, so they're not patent leather," Mizrahi said. "They're vinyl. O.K.? I don't know what vinyl is. I think it's a fibre of some sort. No, it's not a fibre, it' some kind of synthetic substance. It's ; chemical—a fucking chemical. O.K.? G ahead, crucify me . . . but it looks s good."

Mizrahi also had to think about wha would work on television. Todd Oldham, who is designing a line for MTV told me, "We try to do stuff that's TV friendly. Very visual. You don't do a lo of detail work, like in the buttons, because people aren't going to see it. Yo want something that's an immediat read. It doesn't matter if you have a nine color print-silk lining, because you're no going to be trying it on on TV. You hav to stress what's on the outside, not the inside. Also, you have to avoid stripes, because of the strobe effect."

Mizrahi chose to do his whole collection in black-and-white, in keeping wit the Nick at Nite aesthetic, and for th "selling elements" in the show the Nic at Nite people decided to use two- t three-minute videos, each built aroun one of the garments. All the videos sta with a fantasy sequence: in one, we see Laura Petrie-like model ditzily vacuuming the lawn; she bumps the vacuum int a couch on which her husband is sleeping; he jumps up; and the two of the run offscreen. From there we go to th "sell screen" that is familiar from QVC with the 800 number and the produc info appearing around the border.

The finished "Frockumentary," whic will run eight times on Nick at Nite fro October 30th to November 19th, is ve entertaining, and certainly more interesting than most television. I felt while I wa watching it that I was in the presence c something genuinely new. It is possib that what I was looking at was the Devi in the sense that the program was cle evidence of the further seepage of commerce into our amusements. Where, yo ask yourself, does transactional TV lead In one sense, it points to the future. O the information highway, paying for social contact with other people is alrea the norm. In another sense, transaction TV seems to lead back to the past. T Frockumentary is a sort of throwback the golden age of broadcasting, whe George and Gracie talked about Carn tion milk at the breakfast table, a Ozzie and Harriet, whose radio sho was sponsored by the makers of 184 Rogers Brothers Silver, entertained from their house at 1847 Rogers Road."



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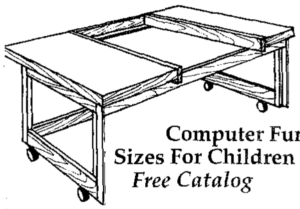

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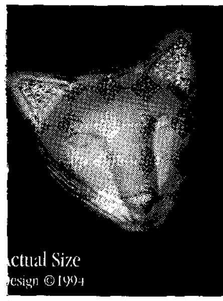

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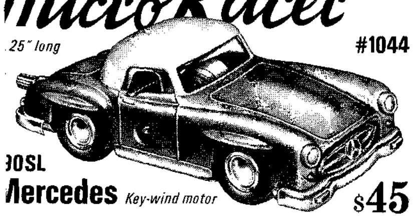

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READING FASHION

THE SERIOUSNESS GAP

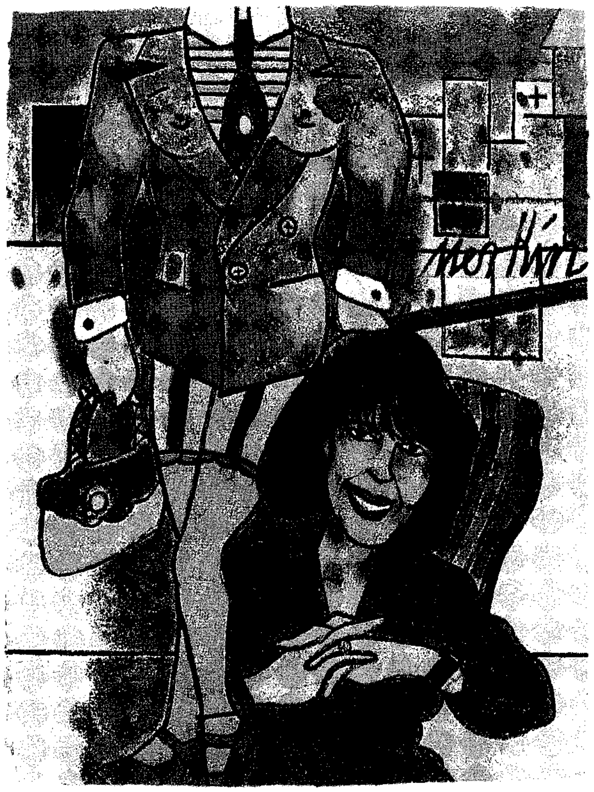
A new book chronicles the history of power dressing and the sexes, and how we all ended up in suits.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

ANNE HOLLANDER, in her entrancing, vivacious, and willful book of "speculations" (her term) "Sex and Suits" (Knopf; $25), has a story to tell. Once upon a time, somewhere near the beginning of the nineteenth century, men's suits attained their present, classic form, and it took women's clothes well over a century—until the nineteen-twenties—to catch up and arrive at feminine outfits equally "serious." In the long interlude of the seriousness gap, "fashion" became a primarily female concern: "With the arrival of collective certainty that powerful men must dress soberly and similarly, and that women's clothes must carry all the burden of deliberate personal fantasy, fashion in dress became 'Fashion,' one of the huge new industries aimed specifically at female consumers." Hollander takes pains to detach her thesis from militantly, or even indignantly, feminist implications; her approach to fashion is Freudian and fatalistic rather than Marxist and judgmental. "The shifty character of what looks right is not new," she writes, "and was never a thing deliberately created to impose male will on females, or capitalist will on the population, or designers' will on public taste." Yet fashion, in the sense of constantly changing manners of dress, is a creation, she states, specific to Christendom, to the European West in its last seven hundred years:

> Long before the days of industrialized fashion, stylistic motion in Western dress was enjoying a profound emotional importance, giving a dynamically poetic visual cast to people's lives, and making Western fashion hugely compelling all over the world. . . . Fashion has its own manifest virtue, not unconnected with the virtues of individual freedom and uncensored imagination that still underlie democratic ideals.

"Sex and Suits" has the narrative drive, and sometimes the stylistic flightiness, of a polemic, yet the only cause Hollander champions is that of the lone individual, in his or her tender need to dress in accord with the obscure and conflicted promptings of human psychology.



One of the epochal moments Anne Hollander addresses is when women were granted legs.

RICHARD MERKIN

First, why is the tailored male suit, the very symbol of dull if not sinister conformity, such an enduring triumph? Because, Hollander answers, it reshaped the male body in conformity with the male nude of classic Greek sculpture, of which a romantically photographed example adorns her dust jacket. Artists of antiquity and the early Middle Ages showed men and women interchangeably draped and gowned; the male and female figures in the sixth-century

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mosaic lineup at Ravenna can scarcely be distinguished. By the late Middle Ages, men were clad in cloth units—tights, close-fitting doublet, padded short coat, fitted and padded sleeves, and codpiece—that imitated armor "in forming stiff abstract shapes around the body, finally culminating in the starched ruff at the neck, a kind of armor-like abstraction of the shirt collar." Women wore small stiff bodices and voluminous skirts; the all-concealing skirt remained a constant until this century, though fashion was permitted to experiment with amounts of décolletage. Hollander's description of a woman thus swaddled is unexpectedly thrilling:

> Her pelvis and legs were always a mystery, her feet a sometime thing, and her bosom a constantly changing theatrical presentation of some kind. Needless to say, her exposed hands were always dramatic costume elements, exciting bare episodes in a sea of fabric.

Men were allowed to have legs, but through much of the eighteenth century low-waisted, full-bottomed, abruptly narrowed breeches and long, collarless, button-heavy, open coats "tended to emphasize a man's hips, belly, and thighs, shrink his chest and shoulders, lengthen his torso and shorten his legs." A gentleman presented a pear-shaped figure garbed in unyielding, wrinkle-prone, light-catching, much-embellished silk.

The revolution in male dress needed not only the utilization of a softer, more flexible fabric, wool, and of a guild of skilled tailors able to shape the wool with padding and darts and curved seams, but the arrival of a new body ideal, which came with the neoclassic revival: the antique male nude, with its "muscular chest and shoulders, lean flanks, long legs," its over-all look of clearly delineated parts harmoniously combined. The ideal male shape shifted from the reposeful pear to the forceful wedge, and tailors worked to achieve an effect of loosely armored nudity—"the real truth of natural anatomy, the Platonic form." The curved collar and the flat-lying lapel were engineered and became "the formal sign of modernity in dress"; the hitherto rather messy linen shirt and cravat were laundered and starched and "folded with a sculptor's care around the neck and jaw, to produce a commanding set of the head on the heroic shoulders." Hollander's raptures should lift the hearts of all those condemned to lives spent in suit-filled boardrooms and commuter trains:

> Thus the male figure was recut and th ideal man recast. Formerly the play of ligh on rich and glinting textures had seemed t endow the gentleman with the play of aristocratic sensibility, and made him an appropriate vessel for exquisite courtesy, schoole wit and refined arrogance without having t reveal the true fiber and caliber of his individual soul any more than that of his body Now the noble proportions of his manl form, created only by the rigorous use o natural materials, seemed to give him an individual moral strength founded on natura virtue, an integrity that flowers in estheti purity without artifice, and made him proper vessel for forthright modern opinio and natural candid feeling.

Or, more practically speaking, "The separate elements of the costume overlap rather than attaching to each other, s that great physical mobility is possibl without creating awkward gaps in th composition. The whole costume ma thus settle itself naturally when the bod stops moving, so that its own poise i effortlessly resumed after a swift dash o sudden struggle."

Meanwhile, women were ever mor emphatically being cut in two. As the nine teenth century progressed, the top halves o women could be daringly exposed, to th entire shoulders and arms, while thei lower halves were kept under bustled hoopskirted wraps. Victorian ambivalenc toward women made of each a mermaid, "perniciously divided female monster." Th upper half, with its face and voice and arm and breasts, suggests a mother's benign lov and offers "both keen pleasure and a so of illusion of sweet safety; but it is a tra Below, under the foam, the swirling wave of lovely skirt, her hidden body repels, it shapeliness armed in scaly refusal, its oce anic interior stinking of uncleanness." Al though equestriennnes and George San and Amelia Bloomer might don approxi mations of male trousers, cross-dressin did not solve the problem, which was "t look both sexually interesting and ordi narily serious . . . at the same time, th way men did."

Hollander doesn't make too much c the moment, in 1858, when a man—Charl Frederick Worth, an English drygoo merchant transplanted to Paris—becam the first professional male designer of fe male clothes, hitherto the domain of fema dressmakers and milliners and milady he self. The rise of male couturiers, in the pe riod of grand courtesans and of fema heroines fashioned by Tolstoy, Hard and Henry James, introduced a more tailored, less merely decorative accent into female fashion, and quickened feminine suspicions that they were being sold a bill of goods—"helping to fictionalize themselves" along the lines of masculine sexual fantasy. Cries for "rational" and "sensible" ways for women to dress were sounded by rigorous reformers, but, Hollander disarmingly avers, "reform on the basis of good sense was, of course, an ill-conceived and losing battle."

The male suit was successful not because it was sexless and unattractive but because it projected 'an invincible physical aplomb, including sexual." Its cunning unity and ease were slowly approached. Between 1900 and 1912, women's clothes, which had been taking up more room han men's ever since the 1700's," shrank to an equal size. The corset, which by cruelly pinching the waist had enforced the division of a woman into two non-communicating portions, gradually loosened. Tailored suits in "formerly 'masculine' fabrics" appeared, "skimmed the unified figure rom neck to instep" and "cleared the ground o expose the feet at work." The liberation of female legs into visibility was critical, and pochal: "To show that women have ordinary working legs, just like men . . . was lso to show that they have ordinary working muscles and tendons, as well as spleens nd livers, lungs and stomachs, and, by extension, brains." All these changes of fashion had to wait upon the implicit concession that women were vital and active much s men are: "Mobility and palpability, replacing stasis and inviolability, became the esirable attributes of the clothed female ody, not just of its garments or of its secret nude state. . . . Like her male counterpart, she, too, could now suggest the elf-possessed animal happy in its skin."

Though Anne Hollander's story has a appy ending, it does not drive home a moral. Indeed, one of her charming qualities, as she explores fashion, is her love for ll of it, even that which is no longer fashionable. Having worked her way up to the asting-off of tight corsets and long petticoats, she devotes some pages to the roposition that these things weren't as ncomfortable as you might think and ad given their wearers satisfaction for centuries—"the sense of completeness hat acceptable clothing always gives, hich is its true comfort." Having devastatingly deconstructed the image of the full-skirted mermaid-woman, she allows that "the theme of nearly nude top and very shrouded bottom remains compelling in the present world, and it seems suitable for moments when the historical and romantic view of women has license to prevail—at the ball or the wedding, and often on the stage or screen." Nothing in fashion shocks her, not even the grungiest contemporary fads, or strikes her as ruinously subversive. All fashion is subversive, scoring its effects off preceding fashions, which become tired: "Love for a particular form is engendered by the slackening of keen desire for an earlier form, a sort of esthetic lassitude that is often unconscious, and becomes conscious only when a new form is offered." Democratic energy comes from underneath. The suit itself rose to propriety out of the so-called English "lounge-suit," donned by gentlemen at country leisure and by laborers for dressy occasions; just so, bluejeans, originally produced for American ranchers and farmers, have spread to the jet set. "What looks right" is multi-determined and includes what feels right: women designers, reclaiming part of haute couture in the twenties and thirties, sought "to express a subjective, tactile delight in the wearing of the clothes, rather than echoing the standard masculine wish to stun the beholder with a vision." Two of the dresses—one worn by Clara Bow in 1928, the other by a *Vogue* model in 1938—with which Hollander illustrates the triumph of "classic purity" and "the single modern shape" are slinky to a fault, so that Bow's "own physical awareness of the dress against her skin is expressed by her sinuous pose and self-conscious gaze."

Dressing ourselves is a daily intimacy and preparation for public performance; we wish both to display ourselves and to conceal ourselves in some kind of consensual uniform. "Fashion confirms the deep importance of all appearance," Hollander writes, in an epigrammatic mood of conclusion. "Like it or not, we all have looks, and we are responsible for them." Yet our decisions, as we dress, are often inscrutably private: "The famous message of dress, the well-known language of clothes, is often not doing any communicating at all; a good deal of it is a form of private muttering." Irrationality seductively lies at the heart of fashion. "The desire to summon explanations only shows that we know how irrational it makes us all seem," Hol-

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lander claims. "Sex and Suits" itself has a dreamlike autonomy. Its illustrative plates are exquisite but few, like signposts on a fabulous journey. Though it includes a three-page bibliography, not one footnote or direct quotation of another author mars its discursive flow. One does not miss, in this dazzling, whirlwind account of Western costume, a determined sociology that would deal in such possibilities as the effect of domestic central heating upon the long-deferred hike in women's hems. Such material speculations get us somewhere but not far enough, and grant things a tyranny over us that they have not earned. Hollander with great cheerfulness and delicacy of perception embraces the chaos of individual determinations present in any human art. In dressing, she writes, "everyone is essentially talking to himself, like a poet." Every fashion "embodies a complicated secret wish." ♦

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FROU-FROU, OR THE FUTURE OF VERTIGO

In 1938, after months of restlessly reading Diana Vreeland's new "Why Don't You?" column in Harper's Bazaar, the author fired back this response.

BY S. J. PERELMAN

JUST in case anybody here missed me at the Mermaid Tavern this afternoon when the bowl of sack was being passed, I spent most of it reclining on my chaise longue in a negligee trimmed with marabou, reading trashy bonbons and eating French yellow-backed novels. What between amnesia (inability to find my rubbers) and total recall (ability to remember all the cunning things I did last night), you might think I'd have sense enough to sit still and mind my own business. But oh no—not I. *I* had to start looking through *Harper's Bazaar* yet.

If a perfectly strange lady came up to you on the street and demanded, "Why don't you travel with a little raspberry-colored cashmere blanket to throw over yourself in hotels and trains?" the chances are that you would turn on your heel with dignity and hit her with a bottle. Yet that is exactly what has been happening for the past twenty months in the pages of a little raspberry-colored magazine called *Harper's Bazaar.* And don't think it does any good to pretend there *is* no magazine called *Harper's Bazaar.* I've tried that, too, and all I get is something called "circular insanity." Imagine having both circular insanity and *Harper's Bazaar!*

The first time I noticed this "Why Don't You?" department was a year ago last August while hungrily devouring news of the midsummer Paris openings. Without any preamble came the stinging query "Why don't you rinse your blond child's hair in dead champagne, as they do in France? Or pat her face gently with cream before she goes to bed, as they do in England?" After a quick look into the nursery, I decided to let my blond child go to hell her own way, as they do in America, and read on. "Why don't you," continued the author, spitting on her hands, "twist her pigtails around her ears like macaroons?" I reread this several times to make sure I wasn't dreaming and then turned to the statement of ownership in the back of the magazine. Just because the Marquis de Sade wasn't mentioned didn't fool *me;* you know as well as I do who must have controlled fifty-one per cent of the stock. I slept across the foot of the crib with a loaded horse pistol until the next issue appeared.

It appeared, all right, all right, and after a quick gander at the activities of Nicky de Gunzburg, Lady Abdy, and the Vicomtesse de Noailles which left me right back where I started, I sought out my "Why Don't You?" column. "Why don't you try the effect of diamond roses and ribbons flat on your head, as Garbo wears them when she says goodbye to Armand in their country retreat?" asked Miss Sly Boots in a low, thrilling voice. I was living in my own country retreat at the time and as it happened to be my day to go to the post office (ordinarily the post office comes to me), I welcomed this chance to vary the monotony Piling my head high with diamond roses and ribbons, I pulled on a pair of my stoutest espadrilles and set off my cat frisking ahead of me with many a warning cry of "Here comes my master, the Marquis of Carabas!" We reached the post office without incident, except for the elderly Amish woman hoeing cabbages in her garden. As I threw her a cheery greeting, Goody Two-shoes looked up gave a rapid exhibition of Cheyne-Stokes breathing, and immediately turned to stone. In case you ever ge down that way, she is still standing there, slightly chipped but otherwise in very good condition, which is more than I can say for the postmaster. When I walked in, he was in process of spitting into the top drawer, where he keeps the money-order blanks. One look a Boxholder 14 and he went out the window without bothering to raise the sash A second later I heard a frightened voice directing a small boy to run for the hex doctor next door to the Riegels'. I spent the night behind some willow near the Delaware and managed t work my way back to the farm withou being detected, but it was a matter o months before I was able to convinc the countryside that I had a twi brother, enormously wealthy but quit

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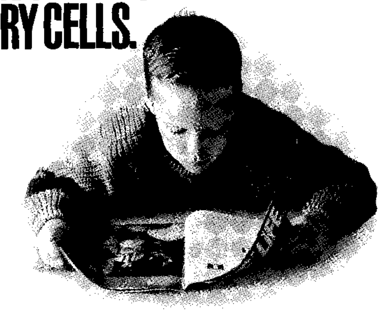
mad, who had eluded his guards and paid me a visit.

FOR a time I went on a sort of *Harper's Bazaar* wagon, tapering myself off on *Pictorial Review* and *Good Housekeeping*, but deep down I knew I was a gone goose. Whenever I got too near a newsstand bearing a current issue of the *Bazaar* and my head started to swim, I would rush home and bury myself in dress patterns. And then, one inevitable day, the dam burst. Lingering in Brentano's basement over *L'Illustration* and *Blanco y Negro*, I felt the delicious, shuddery, half-swooning sensation of being drawn into the orbit again. On a table behind me lay a huge stack of the very latest issue of *Harper's Bazaar*, smoking hot from the presses. "Ah, come on," I heard my evil genius whisper, "one little peek can't hurt you. Nobody's looking." With trembling fingers I fumbled through the advertisements for Afghan hounds, foundation garments, and bath foams to the "Why Don't You?" section. Tiny beads of perspiration stood out on my even tinier forehead as I began to read, "Why don't you build beside the sea, or in the center of your garden, a white summer dining-room shaped like a tent, draped with wooden swags, with walls of screen and Venetian blinds, so you will be safe from bugs and drafts?" I recoiled, clawing the air. "No, no!" I screamed. "I won't! I can't! *Help!*" But already the column was coiling around me, its hot breath on my neck. "Why don't you concentrate on fur jackets of marvelous workmanship and cut, made of inexpensive furs with incomprehensible names? Why don't you bring back from Central Europe a huge white baroque porcelain stove to stand in your front hall, reflected in the parquet? Why don't you buy in a hardware store a plain pine knife-basket with two compartments and a handle—mount this on four legs and you will have the ideal little table to sort letters and bills on, and to carry from your bedside to the garden or wherever you happen to be?" Unfortunately I had only the two legs God gave me, but I mounted those basement stairs like a cheetah, fought off the restraining hands of voluptuous salesladies, and hurtled out into the cool, sweet air of West Forty-seventh Street. I'm sorry I snatched the paper knife out of that desk set, Mr. Brentano, but you can send around a boy for it at my expense. And by the way, do you ever have any call for back numbers of fashion magazines? ♦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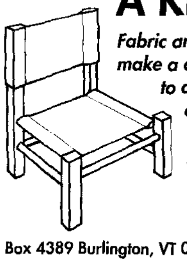
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SHOUTS & MURMURS

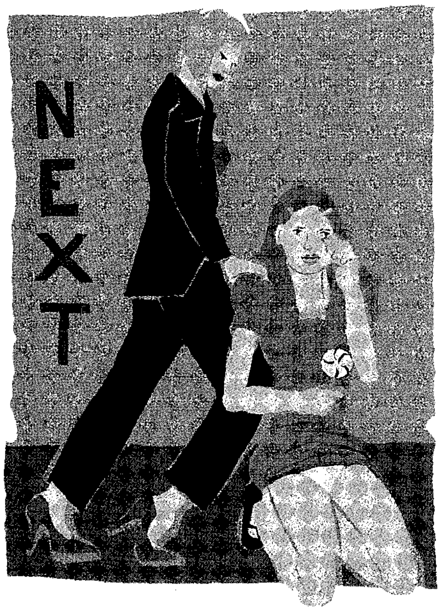
THIS YEAR'S MODEL

BY JAMES WOLCOTT

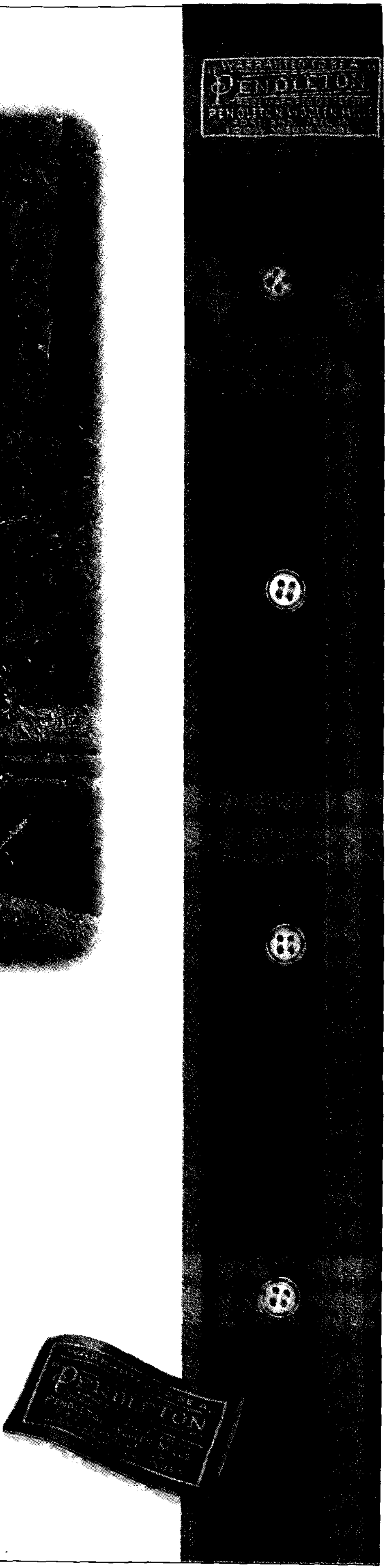
I NEVER passed through Times Square without pausing at the Calvin Klein billboard to pay homage to Kate Moss. I can always take time out of my busy schedule to gawp. The billboard—the size of a drive-in-movie screen, standing on top of the hulking block that once housed a Nathan's hot-dog store and a porn theatre (there's a pun in there somewhere)—showed Moss crouched on all fours, clad only in boots, bra, and jeans, her bottom pointed downtown. The arch of her back suggested an invisible leash. Her expression was just this side of sullen. She looked as if she'd like to wipe off her lipstick with the back of her paw. On subsequent visits, Moss's billboard lost its immediate effect as a bold, iconic statement—a bulletin from the fashion front. She looked left-on-the-shelf, an afterthought, an abandoned kitty. Her outdoor shrine had become a historic landmark. Then, one rainy afternoon in late October, I passed through Times Square, paused to pay my respects—and she was gone. Her billboard had been replaced. I kept blinking, hoping it would bring her back.

As someone who loves models, and wishes they loved him, I deplore this rapid turnover in the doll department. How can we attach phony social significance to models, covering up the aching emptiness in our lives, if they become so easily disposable? As fashion mavens have chorused, the waif is yesterday's parsley. Fashion editors and their readers rebelled at the chronic-fatigue death march of slouchy teen-agers down the runway. Waifs couldn't sell clothes, because they couldn't wear clothes: their adopted slouch conferred indifference upon the outfits that they let droop off them. Feminists accused the waif look of pressuring young women to squeak by on starvation rations in the quest to be thin. In Manhattan, the words "Feed Me" were pasted over bus-shelter posters featuring Kate Moss. In a rare show of unanimity, the fashion world cast the waif into the cold and replaced her with the neo-retro Glamour Girl. Like confetti shot from a cannon, the G.G. is pure glitz.

The new avatar among models is Nadja Auermann, a skyscraper blond White Goddess Nazi Valkyrie with nyloned legs up to her shoulders, struck-by-lightning hair, painted nails, and red lips that scare me. She has appeared on the covers of both *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*. Ironically, Auermann appears even bonier than Moss, but the firm plant of her stiletto heels (she nails each pose) indemnifies her against any accusation of being a fragile reed. All the sexual messages she's broadcasting in her leather-and-lingerie outfits seem to armor her, where poor Kate simply looked plucked. Obviously, the new glamour isn't a nod to the engraved lines of elegance embodied by Audrey Hepburn or Grace Kelly. It's a throwback to the seventies. The photographer Helmut Newton, who staged scenes of de-luxe decadence (Eurotrash watching other Eurotrash imitate mannequins), is back in style. Under his influence, the new glamour is once again the domain of night stalkers and closet necrophiliacs. Nadja Auermann and the other blondes are disco versions of Dracula's assistants. Party on, Death.



But "You can't go home again" applies not only to places but to periods of time. As Sally Brampton wrote in the *Guardian*, reporting from the Paris shows, the seventies look played out the second time around. "Glamour begins to look like a tired old bird, her lipstick smudged, her high heels precarious, as she is dragged on to the catwalk for yet another outing. In the spew of sexual stereotypes . . . one longs to ask where are the clothes for the modern life?" The problem is, we're not in a modern age; we're in a postmodern age where everything is a jumbled borrowing, the very notion of progress is in disrepute, and past and present are pasted over each other. Models used to be place markers in the popular culture. Jean Shrimpton and Twiggy are foreve sixties; there was one year in the lat seventies which belonged to Esmé Now models are at the mercy of ou not knowing what we want from on moment to the next. "Nadja? Oh, she over," someone in the fashion scen told me. By "over" she meant buzzwise. I asked what the new buzz was. "Por stars," she said. "But even that's gettin kinda old." Yeah, kinda. ♦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